

Sangakkara for equal opportunity

INTERNET

Kumar Sangakkara, the Sri Lankan captain, has asked for teams to be given equal opportunity in Test cricket, saying the dwindling number of five-day matches Sri Lanka were playing was limiting their ambitions. Sangakkara welcomed the idea of a world Test championship and said teams should be given the chance of playing a minimum number of Tests in a year.

"It's great to have a Test championship but I believe that all sides should have an equal opportunity to play Test matches," Sangakkara told Reuters in Florida, where Sri Lanka are playing two Twenty20 internationals against New Zealand. "This year we are lucky that India wants to come and play Test matches but the opportunity for Sri Lankan players to fulfil their Test ambitions are getting more and more limited."

Since their tour of Australia in 2007, Sri Lanka have not played a Test series outside the subcontinent. They haven't been to South Africa for a Test tour since 2002 and the Tests in 2011 will be their first in England in five years.

"Sides must be given the opportunity to play a minimum number of Test matches and the Future Tours Programme must be reorganised so some of the best sides tour more than just once in five years," Sangakkara said. "There was once talk of playing a Test championship without Sri Lanka in the first year at a time when we were number two in the Test rankings. These are the inconsistencies they must address."

Mahela Jayawardene, the Sri Lanka batsman, echoed his captain's views. "I think we need to think a bit more about Test cricket, you need to make sure all the teams are going to play eight to ten matches a year minimum, and then you can strike that balance," he said. "I have only played four Test matches in my entire career in Australia; that's in 12 years of playing."

Armstrong's lawyers go after Landis

INTERNET, undated

Lance Armstrong fired back at former teammate Floyd Landis, who has publicly accused him of using performance enhancing drugs, following reports he was now working with law enforcement agencies.

Armstrong's lawyers issued a statement on the cyclist's team's website countering Landis's claims that Armstrong cheated during his seven Tour de France wins.

In the statement, Armstrong's lawyers posted a series of private emails which they claimed were between Landis, his personal doctor and cycling officials and sponsors.

"Even a superficial review reveals a troubling, angry and misplaced effort at retribution by Landis for his perceived slights," the statement said.

"While these types of repeated, tired and baseless accusations against Lance have been proven false in the past, it is quite regrettable, but telling, that so many in cycling are now attacked by a bitter and scorned Landis who, quite simply, has zero credibility."

The posting of the emails came a day after Landis, who was stripped of his 2006 Tour de France win, confessed to using blood-boosting drugs after pleading his innocence for years.

Landis also pointed the finger at Armstrong in emails he sent to media organisations, saying he had witnessed him using illegal drugs.

Armstrong, who has never failed a doping test but has long been accused of wrongdoing by critics and opponents, strongly denied the claims.



Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation general secretary Minur Hossain (R) exchanges MoU documents with BEOL's head of sales and marketing Shoaib Mohammad Asaduzzaman at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel yesterday. BKF president and Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad (L) was also present on the occasion.

Roger missed Rafa

REUTERS, Paris



Roger Federer is looking forward to facing his great rival for the French Open crown a year after Rafael Nadal missed their rendezvous in the final.

With usual contenders Nikolay Davydenko of Russia and Argentine Juan Martin Del Potro having pulled out injured, the road looks clearer for another Roger versus Rafa classic.

"It is hard to pick anybody to say if Roger and Rafa are not going to win who else will it be," Federer, wearing a blue polo shirt and looking calm, told reporters on Friday.

"We'll see how we play. I hope we can play again in the future, because a year away from each other was maybe a bit long," he added.

After 12 months without meeting Nadal, Federer finally caught up with him last week in the Madrid Masters final.

The muscular Spaniard beat the Swiss last Sunday, a year after losing at the same stage in the same place.

"I think anywhere we play is special," said Federer.

"It's always a big match regardless of where it is, how it is. It's one of the great rivalries in sports right now, and obviously in our game the biggest one."

Nadal and Federer have met 21 times, with the Spaniard coming out on top on 14 occasions, comfortably winning three French Open finals against the Swiss.

Neither was keen to jump the gun and anticipate a fourth final showdown on the Paris clay, although the temptation was greater for Federer who made the draw at Roland Garros.

"When you're sitting in that room, you feel like, ah, if only I could have picked maybe (...) Oh, no. You don't even want to start thinking that way," he said with a smile.

"It was a bit nerve-wrecking in some ways. But I'm used to pressure situations, so it was moderate. It was fine."

The pressure will get stronger by the day for the defending champion, who could meet France's Gael Monfils in the fourth round before a possible quarterfinal clash with Swede Robin Soderling who he beat in last year's final.

"Fourteen days down the road and six matches for each of [us] to get into the final. [It] is not my priority to play Rafa," said Federer.

Boateng given green light

AFP, Accra

Portsmouth midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng has been given the go-ahead by FIFA to represent Ghana at the World Cup, the Ghanaian Football Federation (GFA) announced on Friday.

The 23-year-old attacking midfielder was named in Ghana's provisional 30-man squad for the June 11-July 11 tournament but was waiting on official confirmation of his eligibility from world governing body FIFA.

Boateng was born in Berlin to a Ghanaian father and a German mother and began his professional career at Hertha Berlin.

He represented Germany at every youth level after making his Bundesliga debut in 2005 before joining English side Tottenham Hotspur in 2007.

Now with Portsmouth, he committed a foul on Michael Ballack in his side's 1-0 FA Cup final defeat to Chelsea last Saturday that has ruled the Germany captain out of the World Cup.

In a quirk of fate, Ghana will face Germany at the World Cup after being drawn alongside them in Group D, where they will also face Serbia and Australia.

Zuma opens Soccer City

AFP, Soweto

South African President Jacob Zuma on Saturday presided over the opening of Soccer City, the new 94,700-seat stadium that will host the opening and final matches of the World Cup.

The stadium's first professional match drew a crowd of 76,000 -- all the seats that were made available for the game -- for the final of South Africa's FA Cup, the Nedbank Cup.

Zuma greeted players from AmaZulu of Durban and Wits University of Johannesburg, before standing on the field with his hand on his heart for the playing of the national anthem.

The clay-coloured stadium was inspired by the African calabash, and sits between Johannesburg's downtown and its most famous township of Soweto.

WC 2011 will have UDRS in place

Cricket

AFP, London

Cricket's controversial umpire decision review system (UDRS) will be used at the 2011 World Cup despite the technology causing splits amongst players.

The International Cricket Council (ICC), meeting at Lord's on Friday, also decided that the UDRS should be introduced as soon as possible in all Test series.

"The ICC Cricket Committee recommends that UDRS, subject to agreement with ICC broadcaster partners ESPN-Star Sports, should be used in all matches in the World Cup 2011 in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka," said an ICC statement.

As in Test cricket, each team will be allowed two referrals per innings to the third umpire who can replay the incident immediately via television pictures.

The system, however, hasn't been warmly welcomed by all teams and was at the centre of an embarrassing row in January during the Johannesburg Test between South Africa and England.

England complained after television umpire Daryl Harper failed to overturn a not out decision against South African captain Graeme Smith because Harper allegedly failed to turn up the sound on an audio feed from the stump microphone.

To help cure similar future problems, the ICC agreed that a minimum standard of technology, such as ball tracking, including in the third umpire room, should be introduced.

Amongst other decisions, the ICC Cricket Committee also supported, in principle, research into a reduction in the number of teams in the World Cup but more in the World Twenty20.

In an attempt to alter the balance of power when it comes to the switch hit/reverse sweep shot, the batsman will now be prevented from changing his grip or stance before the bowler enters his delivery stride.

Should the bowler see a batsman change his grip or stance prior to the delivery stride the bowler can decide not to bowl the ball.

The ICC also agreed that batsmen trying to steal ground when the bowler is running in to bowl should be discouraged.

Regulations will be looked at that require a batsman to remain in his crease until the bowler's front foot lands.

Senators slate PCB

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistani senators Saturday lashed out at authorities for not taking action against players involved in match-fixing, saying the cricket board should be disbanded to save the sport.

"The present management has failed to take any action against players involved in match-fixing and they must be removed to save Pakistan cricket," Senator Haroon Akhtar told reporters at the national cricket academy.

MPs from the lower house of parliament have summoned Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ijaz Butt, former captain Younus Khan, former coach Intikhab Alam and former manager Abdul Raqeeb to discuss match-fixing on Monday.

Their parliamentary committee is also planning to appoint a panel of judges to investigate the latest match-fixing allegations.

Video footage of a PCB inquiry committee meeting, which was leaked to media, showed players and former officials raising suspicions about match-fixing during the Australia tour.

Pakistan lost all three Tests, five one-day and a Twenty20 match in Australia from December to February, but their defeat in January's Sydney Test has raised doubts about match-fixing.

Australia won by 36 runs despite conceding a 206-run first-innings deficit as Pakistan failed to chase a modest 176-run target.

Wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal, who dropped

three catches off century-maker Michael Hussey and an easy run out of Shane Watson, came under serious doubts from Alam and his Australia tour deputy Aaqib Javed.

The outgoing chairman of International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption Unit, Lord Condon, on Thursday confirmed that Pakistan's Sydney Test defeat is still being investigated by the ICC, a claim denied by Butt.

Akhtar said Butt should be removed to save Pakistan cricket.

"Butt is running the PCB as a one-man show and we appeal on President Asif (Ali) Zardari to remove him to save Pakistan cricket otherwise it will be destroyed by this management," said Akhtar.

Butt, who took over in October 2008, has survived previous calls from senators and MPs for his dismissal as he has enjoyed the confidence of Zardari.

Senator Tariq Azeem said PCB should throw out match-fixers.

"We should not leave the matter to the ICC or anyone else. We should throw the tainted players ourselves," said Azeem.

Butt said Friday that no evidence of match-fixing had been found by the PCB.

"The ICC has all the right to investigate an series or any match, but as far as the Australia tour is concerned the ICC has already said there was no evidence," Butt told AFP.

Pakistan has suffered fixing allegations in the past. A judicial inquiry between 1998-2000 banned former captain Salim Malik and pacerman Aatur Rehman, and fined six others, including current coach Waqar Younus and Wasim Akram.

D/N Tests still distant

Cricket

REUTERS, London

Floodlit day-night Test cricket receded further into the distance on Friday when the International Cricket Council (ICC) said at least 18 months' research needed to be done on different coloured balls.

"We are not as clear as we thought we were," ICC general manager of cricket Dave Richardson told Reuters after a two-day meeting of the ICC's cricket committee at Lord's.

"Some are saying the orange ball is better, others are saying the pink ball is better, there are some who are saying this shade of pink is better than that shade of pink."

"There's a lot of anecdotal evidence so we are at the stage where we say 'let's get the scientists to tell us'."

Richardson told a news conference earlier that he hoped the research would be concluded in 18 months' time to allow the ICC to trial the coloured ball in domestic cricket.

Red balls, which are used in all first class cricket, are difficult to see under floodlights and white balls are currently used with coloured

clothing and black sightscreens in day-night one-day matches. Richardson said the cricket committee had no objection to players wearing coloured clothing rather than the traditional white in day-night tests, which would clear the way for a white ball.

"The manufacturers are in a bit of dilemma as you can imagine, they are trying to manufacture a ball but will it be pink, orange or white?" he said. "So they want a bit more direction from us."

The committee also decided to continue with the Decision Review System (DRS), under which players can refer an on-field umpire's decision for review by an off-field umpire who has the benefit of television replays using ball-tracking technology.

"After a lengthy and constructive discussion, the ICC Cricket Committee suggested that DRS should be introduced as soon as possible in all test arenas," a statement said.

It has also recommended that DRS be used in all matches in next year's 50 overs World Cup in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The committee agreed that all reviews must be requested by either the batsman or the fielding captain within 15 seconds to thwart players in the dressing rooms with access to television replays signalling to their on-field colleagues.

Maria triumphs in Strasbourg

Tennis

AP/AFP, Strasbourg

Maria Sharapova won her 22nd title by beating Kristina Barrois of Germany 7-5, 6-1 at the Strasbourg International on Saturday.

The top-seeded Russian was trailing 5-3 but she won seven straight games to take the first set and a 3-0 lead in the second.

Sharapova is looking to get back to her best after recovering from a right elbow injury.

Barrois was playing her first final on the WTA Tour.

Sharapova reached the final of the claycourt event by beating Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues in the semifinals on Friday.

The Russian superstar, a three-time Grand Slam winner, won 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

"At 4-2 in the first set I lowered my level and she raised hers," Sharapova said after improving to 3-0 lifetime against Medina Garrigues.

"Playing a Spanish player on clay was an

excellent test. I still can't judge my level of game on this surface, but although there are some big events coming, I don't feel pressure."

Sharapova played this tournament for the first time.

"What's weird is usually on the Saturday before Roland Garros I'm in Paris, but here I am in Strasbourg with a final to play at a tournament I've discovered and am really enjoying."

Barrois, the world number 90, defeated America's Vania King 2-6, 6-2, 7-6 to reach her first WTA final.

The German was aiming to become the first Strasbourg winner from her country since Steffi Graf in 1997.

Top seed Sharapova and fifth seed Garrigues met on Friday afternoon after each had completed straightforward victories in their rain-delayed quarterfinals in the morning.

Garrigues, Strasbourg champion in 2005, 2007 and 2008, dominated the first set before ceding the advantage to her opponent, who had little trouble sewing up the match after assuming control of the second set.

Pollard, Proteas fined

Cricket

INTERNET

Explosive West Indies batsman Kieron Pollard was on Friday fined 25 per cent of his match fee for breaching ICC Code of Conduct during his team's second Twenty20 International match against South Africa here.

South Africa were also fined for maintaining a slow over-rate during their 13-run victory Thursday.

Pollard was charged with a Level 1 offence under article 2.1.8 of the code which relates

to conduct contrary to the spirit of cricket. The incident took place in the 18th over of the West Indies innings when Pollard ran towards the non-striker's end in such a way that he impeded the bowler's path to the ball.

The charge was laid by on-field umpires Norman Malcolm and Clyde Duncan as well as third umpire Goaland Greaves.

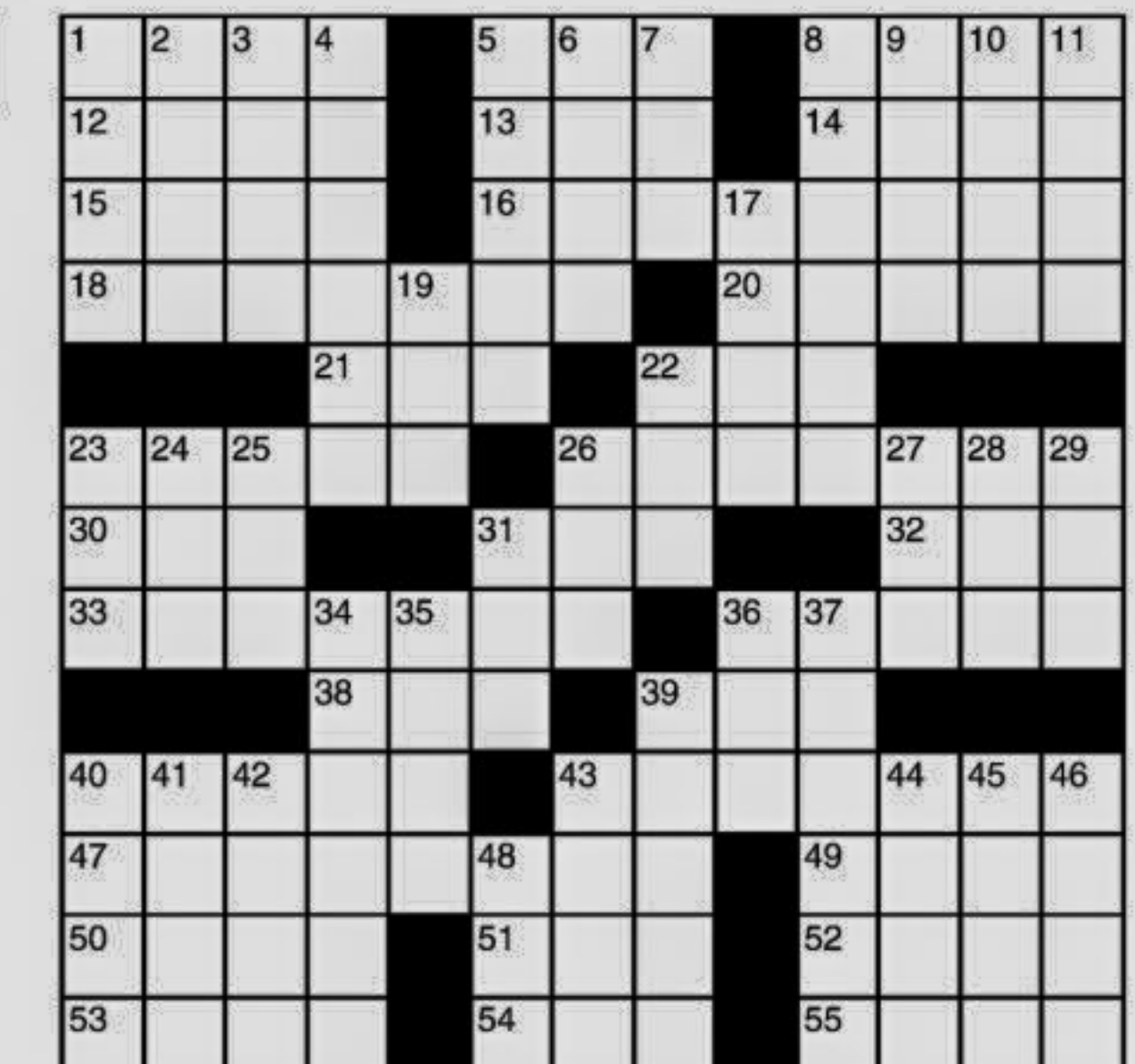
The player pleaded guilty to the charge and accepted the proposed sanction offered to him by Match Referee Roshan Mahanama.

"A competitive attitude is to be promoted and cherished on the cricket field but players must also remember at all times to play within the spirit of the game," Mahanama said in an ICC statement.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 One of the deadly sins
 - 5 — Khan
 - 8 Item on stage
 - 12 Chills and fever
 - 13 Roadside weapon (Abbr.)
 - 14 — but known, ...
 - 15 Entreaty
 - 16 Chaotic place
 - 18 Attack dog, often
 - 20 Beginning
 - 21 Exist
 - 22 Comedian Margaret
 - 23 Pretend
 - 26 Pitcher's warm-up area
 - 30 Possess
 - 31 Opposite of 29-Down
 - 32 Historic time
 - 33 Mark Twain, famously
 - 36 Dazzlingly bright
- DOWN**
- 1 Reindeer herder
 - 2 Wrinkly citrus
 - 3 Tallow source
 - 4 Lipton item
 - 5 Super-market section
 - 6 Robt. E. Lee, for ex.
 - 7 Oklahoma city
 - 8 Disinfectant
 - 9 Seance sounds
 - 10 Garfield's pal
 - 11 Actor Brad
 - 17 Germany reunifier
 - 19 Vase's cousin
 - 22 Poolroom stick
 - 23 Dandy
 - 24 Ram's mate
 - 25 Hostel
 - 26 "See ya"
 - 27 Shell game need
 - 28 Mess up for 31-
 - 29 Opposite of Across
 - 31 Actress Adams
 - 34 Caught in the act
 - 35 Oppositionist
 - 36 Wrigley product
 - 37 Elbow room
 - 39 Waste maker
 - 40 Teensy bit
 - 41 Carry on
 - 42 Taj Mahal city
 - 43 Approach
 - 44 Mexican entree
 - 45 State with conviction
 - 46 "Did — and gimble ..."
 - 48 Ultra-modernist (Pref.)

Solution time: 21 mins.



Action from yesterday's Bangladesh League clash between Brothers Union and Shuktara at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. The match ended in a goalless draw.

CRYPTOQUIP

FRDDXFGLH Z PZLSZFSGU
EXTMCT GF ACFTOGLH XP Z
DZN VGMC, G EXRKA VZOC
SX UZKK VCT TZGFCEXTSVN.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOME FISH WERE MOLDED TO LOOK LIKE THIN PANCAKES, I GUESS ONE MIGHT END UP WITH CREPE COD.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals I

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17
margin in the Col (ret'd) Malek Smriti First Division Cricket League at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium here yesterday.
Batting first, BCAS were all out for 282 runs in 36.4 overs with Sohan scoring 63.
In reply, Victoria Club were bundled out for only 121 runs in 32 overs.
BCAS got four wins from six matches while Victoria Club are still without a victory from their five outings.