



Pakistan left-arm paceman Mohammad Aamer (C) celebrates after dismissing Australia opener Shane Watson (not in picture) on the opening day of the first Test at Lord's in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Aussies kept in check

Cricket

REUTERS, London

Australia successfully negotiated a searching trial by swing and seam on Tuesday to reach 171 for three at tea on the opening day of the first Test against Pakistan at Lord's.

Simon Katich batted throughout both sessions after struggling to get bat to ball before lunch to reach 77 not out at the interval, adding 120 for the third wicket with Michael Clarke at better than a run a minute.

Clarke, who scored a second innings 136 in a losing cause in last year's Ashes Test at Lord's, played some delightful drives to reach 47 before he was lbw to Mohammad Asif off the final ball before tea.

The first Test in England between two overseas teams since the 1912 triangular series started 90 minutes late after overnight rain and Shahid Afridi, with two batsmen making their Test debuts in his side, elected to bowl first after winning the toss.

His decision was vindicated when Mohammad Aamer dismissed Shane

Watson for four after the batsmen misjudged a ball ducking late into the right-hander. Watson did not offer a stroke and was bowled when the ball rebounded off his pads on to the stumps.

Afridi gave himself an exploratory over with his leg-spinners immediately after the interval, conceding six runs including a driven boundary from the first ball by Ricky Ponting.

After a 12-minute break for bad light, the Australian captain took his total to 26, overtaking Brian Lara on the way to move to second place behind Sachin Tendulkar in the all-time Test run-scoring list.

He then turned Aamer uppishly off his hip to short-leg where debutant Umar Amin took a smart reflex catch. Aamer appeared to brush against Ponting on a celebratory run to accept the congratulations of his teammates.

Amin got his finger tips to a sharp chance from Clarke off Aamer when the Australian vice-captain had scored four but, although the ball continued to regularly beat the bat, nothing else went to hand.

Asif, who had bowled beautifully in the morning session with sharp away

swing, conceded three boundaries in an over to Clarke who had begun to time the ball sweetly through the covers.

SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: 171 for 3 in 43 overs (Katich 77 not out, Clarke 47, Ponting 26; Aamer 2-49, Asif 1-139)

PAKISTAN: Butt, Farhat, Azhar, Amin, Umar, Afridi, Kamran, Aamer, Gul, Asif, Kaneria.

Shakil, Sagar still leading

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Masters Abu Sufian Shakil and Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar maintained their joint lead in the Mercantile Bank 36th National Chess Championship at the end of the 11th round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Shakil beat Mizanur Rahman and Sagar defeated FM Aminul Islam to raise their collection to 9.5 points each.

GM Reefat Bin Sattar was in the second position with 8 points after he got walkover against Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin. FM Mehdi Hasan Parag was in third position with 7.5 points after defeating Arman Monir.

Heroes welcome for Dutch

AFP, The Hague

Thousands of fans cheered on the defeated Dutch football team as it embarked on a seven-kilometre boat parade down the canals of Amsterdam Tuesday.

Coach Bert van Marwijk and his team, casual in shorts and T-shirts, boarded a river boat decorated with orange flowers on the IJ River near the central station around 3:00 pm (1300 GMT) to a cacophony of applause and vuvuzelas.

"I have never seen a Dutch team fight to the end like this. The players deserve this parade even if they didn't win," 40-year-old Denny de Jonge, two chains of orange flowers draped around her neck, told AFP as she waited for a glimpse of the floating procession.

The Dutch team lost 0-1 to Spain in extra time in Johannesburg on Sunday, although playing a style of football described by former Dutch superstar Johan Cruyff, a losing finalist at the 1974 World Cup, as "ugly, vulgar, hard."

Wearing an orange T-shirt screaming: "Hup Holland Hup" (Go Holland Go), an orange mane on his head and an orange lion's tail pinned to his shorts in honour of the national symbol, 25-year-old Stefan Bons said Tuesday's parade would "help us

process the disappointment".

"One doesn't know when the Netherlands will play in another World Cup final, thus we have to enjoy this to the maximum!" he said of the team nicknamed Oranje (Orange) after the national colour.

Team captain Giovanni van

Bronckhorst and coach Bert van Marwijk were knighted in The Hague earlier in the day in the presence of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende who called the team an "inspiration".

"The Netherlands is proud of Oranje," Balkenende, wearing an orange tie, told the team at his official

residence where he hosted them for coffee and cakes with orange icing in the garden decorated with orange balloons.

The squad then met their sovereign, Queen Beatrix, before departing by helicopter for their official tribute in Amsterdam.

"Even in second place, the Dutch team are champions in the eyes of their country," the city said in a statement after deciding to press ahead with the boat parade initially scheduled to take place only if the team won.

"We want everyone to be able to see the players, to salute them," said spokeswoman Hilde Bruggink of the KNVB Dutch football association, adding that more than a million people were expected in the Dutch capital.

After the two-hour canal parade, the players will be taken to the city centre Museumplein (Museum Square), where about 180,000 fans watched them lose the trophy to Spain on big screens Sunday, to be presented to thousands of waiting supporters.

About 1,800 police had been deployed around Amsterdam for Tuesday's tribute, as well as about 700 security guards and 200 traffic regulators.

Houseboats along the parade route have been fenced off and were being guarded to prevent a repeat of 1988 when several were sunk by fans celebrating the Netherlands' European Cup win.



Dutch captain Giovanni van Bronckhorst (L) and coach Bert van Marwijk stand in front of the Catshuis in the Hague after they were knighted in the presence of the Prime Minister yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mueller feels incredible

TELEGRAPH

Thomas Mueller has said he never believed he would win the Golden Boot before the World Cup began.

The 20-year-old forward, who only made his international debut in March, scored five times at the World Cup to clinch the award.

David Villa, Wesley Sneijder and Diego Forlan also scored five goals, but the Bayern Munich man's three assists saw him edge out the trio.

"This is just incredible for a newcomer to the World Cup. If anyone had told me I'd end on eight scorer points, I'd have said they were kidding me," Muller said.

"It's an honour of course, but at the end of the day, I'd rather have had the World Cup itself."

Mueller's performances in helping Germany reach the semifinals in South Africa also won him the Best Young Player award.

"It's a huge honour to be part of a group including the likes of Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Michael Owen and the most recent winner, Lukas Podolski," added Muller.

"For me personally, it's terrific confirmation of the work I've put in over the last year. I'm delighted my great run has continued here, and I've really enjoyed it too. The honour will be with me for all time, and it's a wonderful memento too."

Sarkozy blasts French team

AFP, Paris

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"The image shown by the French team in South Africa? Disastrous. I said: 'Those in charge must go'. They are gone, let's not heap abuse on them. The players shouldn't get bonuses. They didn't," he said.

Sarkozy, who had already privately made known his displeasure at France's woe-filled campaign, was responding publicly for the first time since the team's first round exit during a television interview.

Explaining why he had taken time out of his political schedule to meet former team captain Thierry Henry on June 24, Sarkozy said that he had wanted to learn more about why the team had failed so badly.

France failed to win any of its three first round games and scored only once in what had been considered a fairly easy group, in a campaign marked by bitter team infighting and one-day training strike by the players.

Spurs after Fabiano

AFP, London

Tottenham boss Harry Redknapp revealed Tuesday that Sevilla striker Luis Fabiano is high on their wish list, but admitted that the player's salary expectations could prove a stumbling block.

Tottenham have not made any official contact with the Spanish club but Redknapp confirmed he would be interested in the 29-year-old Brazil international, who impressed during the World Cup.

"Yes, I like him," confirmed Redknapp in an interview with ESPN Soccer.net. "He's a fabulous player and would be a brilliant addition to any team."

"It was put to us that he might be available, but we've not made contact with his club Sevilla and, to be perfectly honest, I haven't sat down to discuss any transfer targets with our chairman Daniel Levy, apart from trying to do a deal with Joe Cole."

"I am not unhappy with the squad I have, but of course if a special player came along I would look at it, and Fabiano is a special player all right."

"For sure, he is a class act, but I don't know what he earns. He might be on mega money, so it might prove to be impossible for us."

Meanwhile, Tottenham's interest in free agent Cole continues and Redknapp hopes that the former Chelsea midfielder will opt to head for White Hart Lane.

Cole is thought to be considering offers from Manchester City and Arsenal but Spurs remain in the hunt, with Redknapp looking to team up again with the player he signed for West Ham.

Cesc wears Barca shirt

TELEGRAPH



The Barcelona defenders grabbed the Arsenal midfielder, who is eager to move to the Nou Camp, and managed to pull the shirt over his head as the team stood on stage in front of a huge gathering of supporters.

Barcelona are keen to sign the 23-year-old, who came up through the youth ranks at the Catalan giants before moving to Arsenal as a youngster, and had a big-money offer turned down by Arsenal before the World Cup began.

Fabregas, nevertheless, seemed reluctant to let his Spain team-mates dress him in the famous blue and red shirt during the prank, no doubt aware how it could be interpreted.

England keep sliding

Football

TELEGRAPH

Fabio Capello's England were given their lowest ever World Cup ranking by FIFA after their disastrous campaign was ended by Germany at the second round stage.

England were rated the 13th best team of the 32 that competed in South Africa, two places lower than their previous worst ranking of 11th at the 1958 World Cup in Sweden.

Glenn Hoddle took England to the second round in 1998 but his side were ranked ninth while Sven Goran Eriksson's back-to-back quarterfinal exits earned sixth place in both 2002 and 2006.

The ranking system implemented by FIFA takes into account group results, progress in the competition and teams defeated and the latest conclusions are a reflection of a disastrous campaign.

And he dedicated his World Cup winner's medal to Arsenal. "This is for the Arsenal players, the Arsenal fans, the manager Arsene Wenger and all the staff," he said. "I am really proud of being an Arsenal player."

"It is for all of them. They deserve it and they have a world champion at the club. I am an Arsenal player and I am really proud to be able to give this trophy to all the fans."

Spain were received as national heroes as approximately a million fans came out to welcome home Vicente Del Bosque's team, following their 1-0 win over Holland in the Johannesburg final.

They met King Juan Carlos and Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, and took an open-top bus ride through the streets of the Spanish capital.

Coach Del Bosque said at a brief presentation: "This cup, this triumph is for all of you, and for the whole Spanish football factory."

Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos and Liverpool goalkeeper José Reina were

at the centre of the players' celebrations on the team bus as the parade inched its way down Madrid's Gran Via.

Supporters passed the time by championing the team's World Cup final hero Andres Iniesta, chanting in Spanish: "Thanks to Iniesta, Spain is in fiesta."

As the players finally arrived at the last stop of their circuit around central Madrid, they were greeted by a huge sea of celebrating fans.

Once the whole 23-man squad plus the coaching and backroom staff made their way onto the stage, various members of the party spoke to the assembled supporters.

Captain Iker Casillas, the Real Madrid goalkeeper, said: "I don't know what to say, only that I'm delighted to be here with you. We (the players) have achieved the dream that we've all had since we were small."

Coach Del Bosque added: "It's not only winning but how you win, and that's what these players have done, they are an example to all. Thanks for all the support you've sent us in South Africa, you are also world champions."

Capello's team stumbled out of Group C with a series of languid performances that earned consecutive draws against the USA and Algeria and a 1-0 victory over Slovenia that clinched the runners-up spot in the group.

That set up a round of 16 fixture with old foes Germany who took full advantage of England's apparent deficiencies and were ruthless in subjecting the Three Lions to their heaviest ever World Cup defeat.

The latest failure by an England team on the grand stage has been attributed to a plethora of short term problems including squad unrest, fatigue and the Italian manager's tactical ineptitude.

However, further investigation has seen the finger of blame swing in the direction of the Premier League and the failure of clubs in the development and promotion of academy players.

FIFA President Sepp Blatter is the latest critic of the English game suggest-

ing that a reliance on imports has had a profoundly negative impact on the performances of the national team.

"As for England, ask the FA and the Anglo-Saxon world," Blatter said.

"England is considered the motherland of football, like Brazil is considered as the deepest level of football. But ever since FIFA has existed, everybody has developed."

"There are no more small national teams. Perhaps there are small countries, but their national teams are strong. Football has developed everywhere. Players play in different leagues. The internationalism of football is good for some and not for others."

"One example of that is England. But it is good for Spain. All 11 starting players [in the World Cup final] play in La Liga. All 11. That's the difference."

"You can draw your own conclusions. I am trying to draw the difference between the Premier League and La Liga."

Maradona still off drugs

Football

INTERNET

Diego Maradona's doctor said on Monday the Argentina coach was doing well and had not slipped back into using drugs and alcohol since his team was eliminated from the World Cup with a 4-0 loss to Germany in the quarterfinals.

Dr. Alfredo Cahe said in a radio interview that Maradona was mulling over his choices. Cahe was critical of rumours spreading that the 49-year-old coach, who recently said he has been clean for six years, was severely depressed and using drugs and alcohol again.

"He's a bit down, logically," Cahe said. "But he's not deeply depressed. Nothing like what they (the media) are saying here, that he has slipped back into his addictions. What a thing to say."

Maradona has been holed up at his home in suburban Buenos Aires following the loss to Germany on July 3. He has not said if he will continue as coach.

"As he (Maradona) says, it was a strange game," Cahe said. "I thought I was going to find him in much worse shape, but no. I see him being reflective. He's not resigned to the loss, but angry because the victory escaped him."

The Argentine Football Association has said he can continue if he wants, with Argentina the host nation for next year's Copa America.

Cahe gave no hint about Maradona's plans.

"Diego is going to give us more happiness," Cahe said. "He is thinking about his future in football."

Regarded as the best player of his generation, Maradona has been lambasted at home for his inability to get the most out of a team featuring some of the world's top players like Lionel Messi (Barcelona) and Carlos Tevez (Manchester City).

Torres injury not serious

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool are hopeful that the groin injury suffered by Spanish striker Fernando Torres in Sunday's World Cup final is not as serious as was first feared.

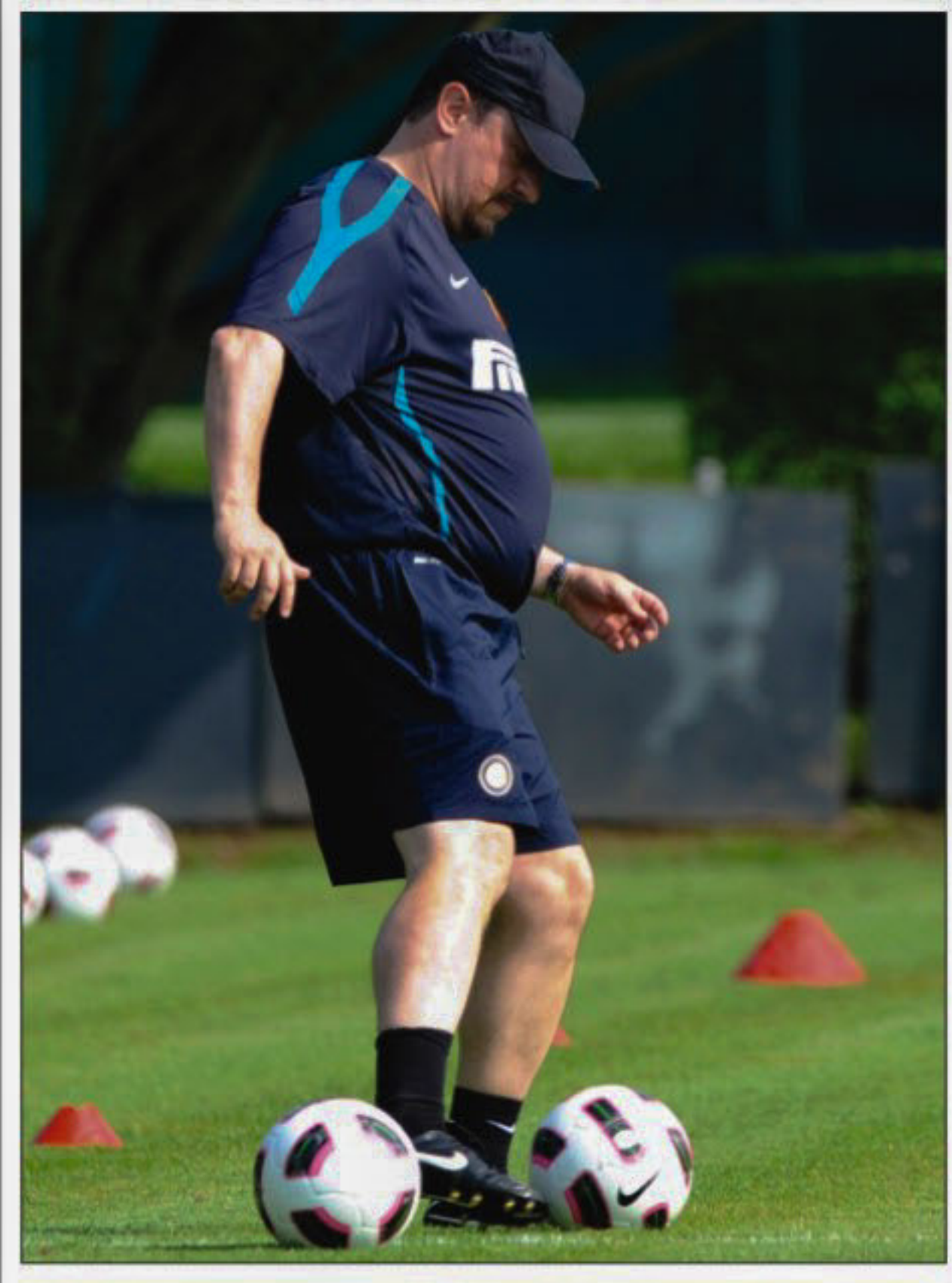
The 26-year-old, who missed the end of the 2009-10 season with a knee injury, suffered the injury just before the end of the 1-0 win over the Netherlands.

But Liverpool doctor Peter Brukner told the club's website: "We've been in touch with the Spanish medical team and they don't think it's too serious."

"We can't say too much more at the moment until it is properly assessed on Tuesday."

He added: "Some of the Liverpool medical staff will go to Madrid later in the week to fully assess the injury and organise his rehab. At this stage we don't think it's too serious."

Torres has endured an injury-plagued season at Anfield although he finished as Liverpool's top scorer with 22 goals in all competitions.



TIME TO SHED SOME WEIGHT: Inter Milan new Spanish coach Rafael Benitez controls the ball during a training session in Appiano Gentile, about 40km north of Milan, yesterday. Benitez took over the Italian and the European champions from a more colourful Jose Mourinho after a six-year association with English Premier League club Liverpool.

PHOTO: AFP