



Reigning Tour de France champion and current leader Alberto Contador of Spain leads a pack of riders during the 17th stage of the tour Pau to Tourmalet Pass on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nat'l boxing final today

SPORTS REPORTER

The final of the SouthEast Bank 26th national senior boxing will be held at the Mohammed Ali Boxing Stadium today.

Twenty-two boxers are going to fight in eleven different weights for the gold. SA games gold winner Jewel Ahmed Jony and Abdur Rahim will compete in the finals in 60kg and 64kg weight categories.

A total of 150 boxers participated in the eleven different weight categories in this tournament.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar will distribute the prizes among the winners.

Ashes tickets selling fast

AFP, Sydney

Tickets are selling fast for this year's Ashes cricket series against England with some Test days already sold out, Cricket Australia said on Friday.

Tickets for the opening three days of the third Test at Perth's WACA Ground have sold out while the fifth Sydney Test has sold out on day one and has very few seats remaining for days two and three, CA said.

Brisbane's Gabba, Adelaide Oval and Melbourne Cricket Ground have also sold steadily, but tickets still remain for all days, it said.

"There was ticket sales hysteria around the last 2006-07 Ashes series here and while we haven't quite reached those levels, ticket sales remain strong," Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland said in a statement.

"In all, there are very few tickets remaining for the opening one or two days of play across all Ashes Tests and I certainly encourage cricket fans to get in quickly or they may be disappointed."

The opening Test at the Gabba gets underway on November 25 followed by Tests in Adelaide (December 3-7), Perth (December 16-20), Melbourne (December 26-30) and Sydney (January 3-7).

England hold the Ashes after winning the last year's series 2-1 at home.

Tiger top

FROM PAGE 17
Rounding out the international top five were soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo (\$40 million) and boxer Manny Pacquiao (\$38 million), SI.com said.

Basketball player Allen Iverson, No. 8 on last year's U.S. list, dropped entirely out of the top 50, SI.com said. Tennis player Maria Sharapova was the only female athlete to make either list, ranking No. 20 on the international list at \$19.9 million.

NAME	SPORT	TOTAL EARNINGS
Tiger Woods	(golf)	\$90.5m
Phil Mickelton	(tennis)	\$61.7m
LeBron James	(basketball)	\$61.6m
Floyd Mayweather	(boxing)	\$60.25m
David Beckham	(football)	\$45.8m
Lionel Messi	(football)	\$44m
David Beckham	(football)	\$40.5m
Cristiano Ronaldo	(football)	\$38m
Ichiro Suzuki	(baseball)	\$37m
Alex Rodriguez	(baseball)	\$37m
Shaquille O'Neal	(basketball)	\$36m

Schleck wins stage, but Contador leads

INTERNET



Alberto Contador moved closer to retaining the Tour de France as he crossed Andy Schleck over the line at the top of the Col du Tourmalet.

Spaniard Contador retained his eight-second advantage over his Luxembourg rival following the last Pyrenees stage which finished at one of the race's most famous summits.

Schleck, second behind the Spaniard in the Tour last year, is weaker in time trials and the Astana rider will be a massive favourite to extend his advantage in Saturday's pivotal 52km time trial between Bordeaux and Pauillac.

To see the race decided on the slopes of the Tourmalet, the first mountain featured in the race a century ago, is probably what the organisers had in mind and so it transpired.

The top two riders went head-to-head for the last 10km of the 18.6km ascent of the Tourmalet, the concluding stanza of the 174km 17th stage from Pau.

The 25-year-old from Saxo Bank led his rival virtually the whole way up the climb but despite hammering out a vicious tempo, he was unable to drop Contador who briefly attacked with 4km remaining but otherwise was content to sit on Schleck's wheel.

They passed through the fog at the 2115m summit side-by-side although Contador, who gained the yellow jersey after Schleck suffered a mechanical problem on stage 15, did not contest the victory to give the man in the white jersey his second stage win in this year's race.

But that is likely to be small consolation for

Schleck who lost 1:44 to Contador in the Anney time trial last year.

Despite a crash after 24km, Samuel Sanchez was part of a chase group that followed the elite pair up the highest paved col in the French Pyrenees and he left Denis Menchov in the final metres to stretch his lead to 21 seconds over the Russian in the battle for the final podium place.

The remaining members of that group complete the top 10 on GC with Jurgen Van Den Broeck and Robert Gesink retaining their overall positions, Joaquin Rodriguez and Ryder Hesjedal moving up while Roman Kreuziger and Chris Horner jump into the top 10 at the expense of Levi Leipheimer and Alexandre Vinokourov.

Remi Pauriol, Juan Antonio Flecha, Edvald Boasson Hagen, Krijtan Koren, Alexandr Kolobnev, Marcus Burghardt and Ruben Perez Moreno attacked early on and opened up an eight-minute lead.

They crossed two classic first mountain passes, Marie-Blanque and Souler, ahead but their break soon became a moot point as Schleck's Saxo Bank set a relentless pace on the run-in to the Tourmalet.

They peeled off one by one before Schleck's attack halfway up the final climb of this year's race and only Contador could follow.

The 29-year-old from Madrid was stout in his defence of the maillot jaune and now looks destined to claim his third Tour de France title in Paris on Sunday.

Anthony Charteau will become the 12th Frenchman to win the mountain classification if he finishes on the Champs-Elysees after retaining his polka dot jersey.

Hamilton crashes in Hockenheim

REUTERS, Berlin



Championship leader Lewis Hamilton crashed his McLaren in first practice for the German Grand Prix while Michael Schumacher lapped second slowest.

Hamilton, winner at Hockenheim in 2008, skidded off and sent his McLaren sideways into the tyre barriers.

"I'm in the wall, the car is damaged. Heavily," he said over the team radio.

While Germany's Adrian Sutil was fastest for Force India in treacherous conditions, compatriot and seven-times world champion Schumacher stood out at the opposite end of the timesheets on his first home appearance for Mercedes.

The 41-year-old's quickest lap was 0.341 better than Japanese Sakon Yamamoto, preparing for only his second race since 2007.

Schumacher, back at Hockenheim after a four-year absence, had talked on Thursday of his hopes of getting back on the podium.

McLaren had hoped to get some testing miles on their new floor and 'blown diffuser' but the rain and spray made that difficult.

Bowlers hurting Tigers

FROM PAGE 17

Bangladesh in both formats.

In Tests, the left-handed pair added a century-stand twice and eight 50-plus partnerships in both formats.

And the solid top-order triangle (all left-handed) is complete when you see Junaid Siddiqui's figures and his contribution in huge partnerships as well.

Not a purists' delight, the doughty Rajshahi lad made more runs in nine games than Ashraf in 11 ODIs. He has also done well in Test cricket after a tough 2009, scoring a century and three fifties in six games.

As for his contribution as

part of a batting pair, Junaid added 200 with Tamim Iqbal against India and was also involved in a 167-run stand with Mushfiqur Rahim against England in Chittagong.

But the same can't be said about Shakib. After his century against New Zealand and 96 at home against England, the southpaw hasn't done anything of note in Test cricket and in the shorter format, has been averaging less than 25 runs per innings.

His close buddy Mushfiqur Rahim made a brilliant start to 2010 with a 101 against India and then two fifties against England in the

Chittagong Test. But in the next three Tests, he has made only 73 runs and with a couple of fifties in one-day cricket, one is inclined to say that the wicketkeeper-batsman hasn't done justice to his talent. Similarly, Riyad has given it away after he hit a peak in three Tests.

As a footnote, Mohammad Ashraf has had better years than 2010, and probably really needs a break after a monotonous streak of 11 one-dayers where he has come up with one half-century. Surely, the most talented batsman of this country needs to rise from the ashes.

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Sangakkara questions Test rankings

CRICINFO

Sangakkara, Sri Lanka's captain, has questioned the way the ICC Test rankings work. He was responding to a query whether the players take seriously a system that has India at No. 1 despite not having won the Russian in the battle for the final podium place.

"You should have asked that question of Haroon [Lorgat, ICC's CEO], who was here a while ago..." Sangakkara said. "If rankings can't be understood by the public, the players, or the administrators, what's the use of having rankings? If you want rankings, they should count towards playing a Test championship."

"Rankings need to be fairly done. A fair FTP is the first step towards having proper rankings. Once every two years each side should play each other at least once, home or away. That's how you get a fair deal when it comes to Test cricket."

Sri Lanka themselves were ranked No. 2 last year without having won a Test in India, Australia and South Africa, a spot they lost after their loss to India in India. About his own side's dismal record in the three countries ranked higher than them, Sangakkara said, "I don't think we have played enough Test cricket away. Two Test matches here, two Test matches there. I think that's not good. We need to play Tests regularly."

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Life after Murali for Lanka

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka entered a new cricketing era on Friday, facing an uncertain future without the legendary Muttiah Muralidaran, the world's leading wicket-taker.

Muralidaran, 38, quit Test cricket on Thursday after reaching the unprecedented 800-wicket landmark, having played a major role in a 10-wicket victory over India in Galle.

The off-spinner finished with more Test (800) and one-day (515) wickets than any bowler in history, a record that is unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future.

Among bowlers still playing Tests, India's Harbhajan Singh leads the pack with 355 wickets and New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori has 325.

Muralidaran was the kingpin of the Sri Lankan attack for the past 18 years, and skipper Kumar Sangakkara admitted his inspiring presence will be missed -- besides the bagful of wickets each time he came on to bowl.

"My theory is that I am not going to look for another Murali because you are not going to find one," said Sangakkara. "There will be no one like him."

"For me, leading out the side without Murali will be a huge loss. But it gives us an opportunity to see how really the other bowlers will be able to give us Test wins."

"I don't think anyone is going to take eight or nine wickets for us. We'll share the wickets out, do the hard work necessary and win games by bowling the unique way."

Before Muralidaran made his debut against Australia at home in 1992, Sri Lanka had won just two of their past 40 Tests.

Since then, he figured in 54 of Sri Lanka's 59 Tests wins, claiming 438 wickets in the success.

Muralidaran was so dominant that former teammate Chaminda Vaas, with 355 scalps, is the only other Sri Lankan to touch the 100-wicket mark.

Sling-arm fast bowler Lasith Malinga, who destroyed India's batting with a five-wicket haul in the first Test, comes a distant third with 98 wickets.

Muralidaran was, however, confident that Sri Lanka had a bright future with many upcoming bowlers in the ranks.

Kumar said other bowlers will struggle to take eight or nine wickets in a Test, but cricket has changed and I am sure they will do a good job," the 133-Test veteran said.

"But I assure you, you won't miss me much, because there are some very talented bowlers in our country and they will serve the team well."

Leading the spin pack after Muralidaran will be left-arm Ranga Herath and the unorthodox Ajantha Mendis, while off-spinner Suraj Randiv waits in the wings.

Herath, 32, has 71 wickets from 22 Tests, while Mendis, 25, is a wicket-taker in the Muralidaran mould with 44 wickets so far in 10 matches.

Both are expected to feature in the second Test against India starting at the Sinhalese sports club ground on Monday.

"The door is open for those willing to step in," said Sangakkara. "All I can tell them is that they should be ready for a lot of hard work."

Pak greats hail too

Cricket

INTERNET

Glowing tributes continue to flow Muttiah Muralidaran's way with former Pakistan spinner Saqlain Mushtaq saying the Sri Lankan magician took the art of off-spin bowling to its pinnacle.

Muralidaran quit Test cricket in great style, by getting his 800th wicket in the first Test against India.

"I still think that Murali can play on for one or two years in all forms of the game. He is a great spinner who mastered and took the art of off-break bowling to new heights," Saqlain told PTI from London.

"He is a magician in the true sense and I think he and Shane Warne gave spinners a new respect in international cricket," he added.

Saqlain said although it was he who invented the 'Doosra' but Muralidaran made full use of the art.

"Murali used this delivery as a great wicket-taking weapon and I felt proud watching him do this. I don't think any bowler can break the record of 800 Test wickets," he said.

Pakistan's cricket coach Waqar Younis said Murali should continue playing One-day format as world cricket would be poorer without him.

"I just hope he continues to play limited overs cricket because the sport needs great bowlers and people like him. As a tail-ender it was always a big challenge facing him so I think

MONACO DIAMOND LEAGUE

Gay unhappy despite record

Athletics

REUTERS, Monaco

Tyson Gay was disappointed with his performance after winning the 200 metres in a meeting record 19.72 seconds at the Monaco Diamond League event on Thursday.

The 27-year-old was ahead off the bend and poised for a comfortable victory until Jamaican Yohan Blake, running in lane eight, came blazing down the home straight and almost closed the gap on the tiring American.

"I ran too wide in the corner, I slipped a bit. I wanted to run faster but it's okay," Gay, the 2007 world champion, told reporters.

Blake, training partner of world record holder Usain Bolt, clocked 19.78 to improve his personal best by almost a second.

On a hot and humid evening that produced seven world leading efforts, there was also frustration for 110 metres hurdler David Oliver, who had targeted Dayron Robles' world record of 12.87 but hit two barriers on his way to the line in 13.01.

"My reaction wasn't really good. I wasn't ready. I wasn't completely set," said Oliver, who ran 12.89 in Paris last week.

"That's okay, I have got the stadium record

Roddick revisits Atlanta

Tennis

AFP, Atlanta

Andy Roddick resumed where he left off nearly a decade ago, advancing with a 6-1, 6-7 (1/7), 6-3 win over Rajeev Ram at the Atlanta Tennis Championships nine years after his last appearance at the venue.

Third seed Leyton Hewitt fell victim to Slovak Lukas Lacko, who stunned the Australian with five breaks of serve to advance into his fifth quarterfinal of the season 6-4, 6-2. Hewitt, winner of the Halle title last month, now stands 20-9 on the season.

South African Kevin Anderson ended the run of local prod Donald Young 7-5, 6-3.

The top-seeded world number nine benefited Thursday from a first-round bye to start his week and took full advantage in a match where he never dropped serve against his number 149 opponent who lost his 15th of the season.

The American claimed the first title of his

there would be many players around who would be relieved that Murali has retired from Test cricket," Waqar said.

Waqar said 800 Test wickets was a milestone no one would have imagined to be achieved many years ago.

"But Murali made this possible, his sheer endurance and the enjoyment he brought into his cricket and bowling were his gifts which can't be transferred to anyone," he said.

Former Pakistan captains Javed Miandad and Moin Khan said facing Murali was their toughest challenge as batsmen.

"I pay tribute to Murali because he faced so many questions over his bowling action and he eventually got cleared but he never let his shoulders fall down. He fought on and achieved records others could only dream off," Moin said.

"Facing him was always a big challenge so as a batsman. I would be happy he has retired but I sincerely want to see him play in the next World Cup, he brought value to cricket."

Miandad said batsmen had to adjust their techniques while facing Muralidaran.

"I think it is a huge achievement for Murali to have completed 800 Test wickets and to do it in a Test that Sri Lanka won, I don't think there could have been a better farewell for him," Miandad said.

Former captain Wasim Akram there would not be another bowler like Muralidaran.

"I think Test cricket has lost a great bowler and human being with his retirement," Akram said.

and points in the Diamond League. I want to win the Diamond League this year."

Kenyan Silas Kiplagat pipped Moroccan Amine Laalou on the line in the men's 1,500 to post a year's best time of 3:29.27 and lower his personal best by five seconds.

"I knew I could do it. I could not say I ran to do it but I bettered my personal record. That's very important," said the 20-year-old Kiplagat.