

Clock mocks with Gatlin

Former Olympic 100 metres champion Justin Gatlin looked understandably stunned after the clock showed he had clocked 9.81 seconds at a meeting in Padua on Friday. The 28-year-old American had predicted he might run under 10 seconds. He had not, though, expected to set the third fastest time of the year. A report on the Italian athletics federation's website said Gatlin's scepticism was justified when the time was later adjusted to a more realistic 10.15.



Razzak's slide after changed action

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

The general perception on Abdur Razzak recently among the cricket fraternity has been that the left-arm spinner has lost his bite after his bowling action went through a change, but the bowler sees it quite differently.

He believes that it is the introduction of Twenty20 cricket which has made the bowler's job difficult these days.

"Yes, there is a question whether I have lost bite in my bowling after the changed action. But I think there is hardly any problem with my bowling," defended Razzak while talking to The Daily Star.

"What I believe is that Twenty20 cricket has changed the whole scenario for the bowlers as it is now difficult for any bowler to keep the economy rate under three or four.

"For Twenty20, the batsmen have innovated some new shots and the Powerplay is also playing a big role in this regard. Look at any international bowler you find the evidence in favour of my arguments," he observed.

The statistics however showed that Razzak lost rhythm after changing the bowling action. Before the imposition of the ban, he took 111 wickets in 81 one-day matches at 4.39 but since coming back in July 2009, he picked up just 33 wickets in 22 matches at 5.00 runs per over. His average and strike rates have also plummeted.

Mohammad Salahuddin, who played a huge role in bringing back Razzak to international cricket, nevertheless believes that the changed action has been a factor in his decline.

"My observation is that the accuracy is an asset for any spin bowlers. I think after changing of action, Razzak struggled little bit with his length and that was the reason he looked to have lost his bite in the limited-over game," explained Salahuddin, who is now working with him at the Tigers camp.

He also drew comparisons with Bangladesh's other left-arter, Shakib Al

Hasan, saying that one of Shakib's main strength is his accuracy.

"Shakib [Al Hasan] has very few variations with his spin but he's very accurate as a bowler," said Salahuddin.

The 28-year-old has had a major role in Bangladesh's limited-over success, memorably his contribution in Tigers' 2007 World Cup success in the West Indies. But he seemed to have lost his rhythm since making a return to international cricket in July last year after being banned for eight months due to suspect action.

So far though, 2010 has been a terrible year for Razzak as he has gone wicketless in the first five matches this year, scalping a grand total of just 11 wickets from 14 one-day internationals at an economy rate of 5.17 and an average of 60.18.

Razzak, for his part, admitted that he has been going through a trough. "I know my success rate in this year is not good. I am going through a bad patch but I am working on a few variations like the arm-ball and ball gripping.

"Right at the moment World Cup is not in my mind, rather I am looking forward to the upcoming New Zealand tour and then the home series against Zimbabwe," he said.

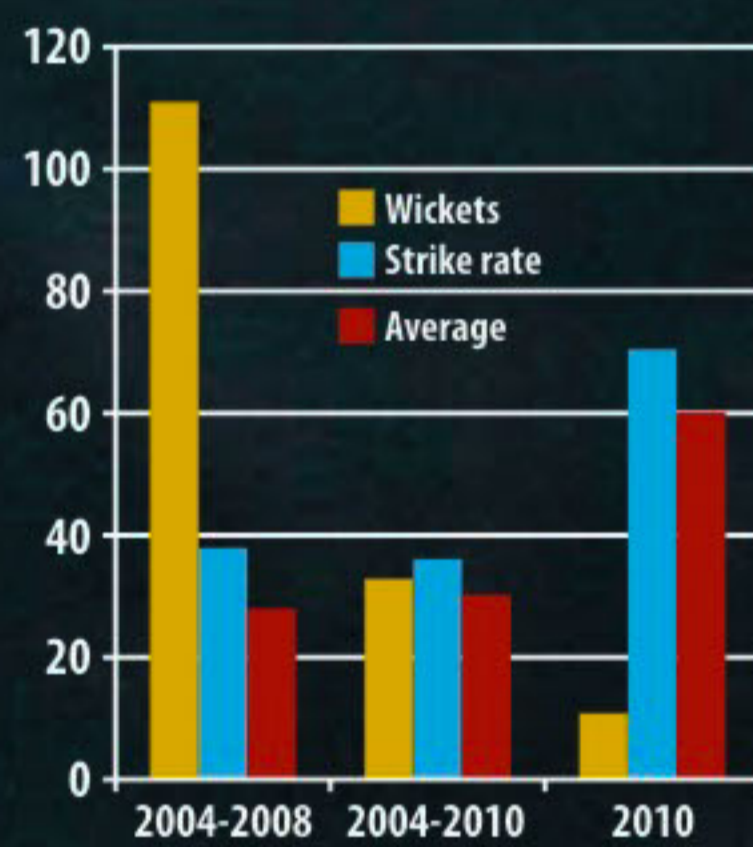
Razzak's action was declared legal after the extension of his bowling arm changed to the extent that both his stock delivery and faster ball were within the ICC tolerance level of 15 degrees.

"I think the changed action made him a better bowler but there has been a need sometime to adopt with the new action.

"Now he could be a better bowler even for the longer-version game. He is working to get back his full rhythm, especially the accuracy. I hope he gets the result in the next assignment against New Zealand," said Salahuddin.

The bowler himself was also confident with the upcoming assignments.

"All our assignments now are at home conditions, which is a big advantage for a bowler like me. Hope the wicket will be helpful for us as it's always in the subcontinent. I am really looking forward," said Razzak.



Spain, England sparkle

AFP, Paris



Spain made an impressive start to their quest for an historic treble in the opening salvos in Euro 2012 qualifying on Friday, which saw wins for England, Holland and Germany but defeat for France.

Spain are seeking to become the first country in history to annex a World Cup and two European titles.

And Vicente del Bosque's men, in their first competitive outing since scaling football's global summit at Soccer City in July, swept aside little Liechtenstein, ranked 141 places below them in FIFA's rankings, 4-0 in Vaduz.

Liverpool forward Fernando Torres, who failed to score in South Africa, rediscovered his touch with a double, the rout completed by the two Davids, Villa and Silva.

"I feel better with each passing day following the injury and the goals tonight give me a lot of confidence," said Torres.

Holland, defeated 1-0 by Spain in the World Cup final, were also quick out of the blocks on the long road to Ukraine and Poland, Bert van Marwijk's Oranje dishing out a 5-0 beating

shaken off the lethargy that had gripped him at the World Cup, conjuring up three assists.

Germany, who so crucially exposed England at the World Cup, where they finished third, eked out a 1-0 win over Belgium in Brussels.

Evergreen striker Miroslav Klose's 53rd international goal secured the three Group A points for Joachim Loew's side.

Despite the win Germany are lying second to Guus Hiddink's Turkey, 3-0 winners in Kazakhstan.

World Cup flops France entered their post-Raymond Domenech era in the same way they had left it, with a defeat -- new manager Laurent Blanc's competitive debut resulting in a 1-0 home loss to Belarus.

In Tallinn, Estonia had 2006 world champions Italy running scared, with Sergei Zenjov giving them a shock early lead.

But the Azzurri, under new management after their own failed World Cup defence, turned the game in three second-half minutes with goals from Antonio Cassano and Leonardo Bonucci to escape with a 2-1 win.

It was Italy's first win of 2010 and first success in eight matches.



England striker Jermain Defoe (R) shoots past Bulgaria defender Ivan Ivanov to score his hat-trick during their Euro 2012 qualifying encounter at Wembley on Friday.

to minnows San Marino.

Torres's Liverpool team-mate Dirk Kuyt set the Dutch on their way with an early penalty, with Klaas-Jan Huntelaar's hat-trick and veteran Ruud van Nistelrooy's injury-time strike rounding off their five-star performance.

At Wembley, England, desperately disappointing in South Africa, went some way on the road to redemption with a sparkling 4-0 rout of Bulgaria.

Jermain Defoe's treble and Adam Johnson's first goal for the Three Lions will have helped relieve the mounting pressure on coach Fabio Capello.

Key to the win was a revitalised Wayne Rooney, who has

The most extraordinary game of the night occurred in Guimaraes, where an 89th-minute goal from Andres Avraam earned Cyprus a 4-4 draw at Group H rivals Portugal, whose coach Carlos Queiroz has been banned for six months for clashing with anti-doping officials prior to the World Cup.

The visitors took a third-minute leader through Efstathios Aloneftis but Portugal quickly levelled through Hugo Almedia and twice led in the second half, only to be pegged back at the death.

Elsewhere Greece, shock winners of Euro 2004 in Portugal, came from behind for a 1-1 home draw against Georgia and

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First T20 today

Pakistan try to regain focus

Cricket

AFP, Cardiff

Pakistan's scandal-hit cricket team tried to regain their focus Saturday on looming tour matches against England after British police questioned three star players over an alleged betting scam.

Test captain Salman Butt plus bowlers Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif were all released without charge Friday after the interviews at a police station near the "home of cricket", Lord's in north London.

But the trio -- who protest their innocence -- are still battling charges under the International Cricket Council's (ICC) anti-corruption code and have been barred from

playing any further matches pending the outcome of their case.

Aamer, at 18 one of the game's hottest talents, Asif, 27, and Butt, 25, had already withdrawn from the England tour claiming "mental torture", missing Pakistan's eight-run win over county side Somerset on Thursday.

Team manager Yawar Saeed said Friday he was "not happy" about the situation but was trying to focus on his duties ahead of the forthcoming two Twenty20 internationals and five one-day games against England.

The team was due to train in Cardiff on Saturday ahead of their first Twenty20 fixture in the Welsh capital on Sunday.

Meanwhile, England Twenty20 captain Paul Collingwood said the Sunday of the last Test, when the allegations emerged, was "one of the

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Anu fires Sonali to big win

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Banking on Anu's hat-trick, Sonali Atit Club defeated Diamond Friends Club by 3-1 in the Hafijul Islam Khan Uttu Smriti First Division Football League at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium yesterday.

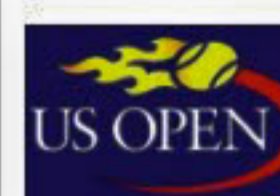
It wasn't plain sailing for the winners who were rocked by an eighth minute goal from Milton. The second half, however, belonged to Anu as he struck in the 56th, 65th and 70th minutes to post the first hat-trick of the league so far.

This victory raises Sonali Atit Club to five points from six

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Nadal, Murray show class

AFP, New York



Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray stayed on course for a US Open semifinal showdown in Friday's second-round action with both recording straight sets victories.

Top-seeded Nadal pounded his way past Denis Istomin of Uzbekistan 6-2, 7-6, 7-5 in the featured night session match on Arthur Ashe Stadium court.

Fourth-seeded Murray saw off Jamaica's Dustin Brown 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 on the same court earlier in the day.

Nadal next plays France's Gilles Simon who defeated Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany 4-6, 6-3, 1-6, 6-1, 6-3, while Murray takes on Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland who ousted Juan Ignacio Chela of Argentina 7-5, 6-3, 6-4.

There were mixed fortunes for US hopes with teenager Ryan Harrison squandering three match points against Ukraine's Sergiy Stakhovsky in a fifth set tie-breaker before losing 6-3, 5-7, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6.

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Rubcic due on Sept 8

SPORTS REPORTER

Newly appointed football coach of Bangladesh national team Robert Rubcic will arrive in Dhaka on the 8th of this month. The 46-year old Croatian recently signed an online agreement with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) while he will put pen on paper after landing here, said a press release from the federation yesterday.

Apart from his nearly 50,000 US dollar salary, the Croat will be provided with accommodation, transport, food and other facilities.

Rubcic's first assignment with the national squad is set to be the Asian Games in November. Besides, he is expected to lead the side in the Olympic pre-qualifiers, the AFC Challenge Cup and the

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Zia, Niaz on 3.5 points

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmasters Ziaur Rahman and Niaz Murshed earned 3.5 points each after the fifth round of the 7th IGB Dato Arthur Tan Malaysia Open Chess Championship at the CitiTel MidValley in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

Another Bangladeshi, Abdullah Al Saif, earned 2 points from five rounds.

In the fifth round, Zia drew with GM Neelotpal Das of India, Niaz beat Sutarno of Indonesia while Saif lost to Laksana Augusta of Indonesia.

Afridi says sorry to all

AFP, Cardiff

Pakistan one-day captain Shahid Afridi apologised here on Saturday for the 'spot-fixing' row engulfing the tourists.

Test captain Salman Butt and bowlers Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif have been charged with various offences under the International Cricket Council's anti-corruption code and provisionally suspended, while the trio have all been interviewed by police.

The three were withdrawn by Pakistan from their Twenty20 and one-day series

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SPORTS POLL

TODAY'S QUESTION

Is dropping Asif, Amir and Butt for the ODI series enough to punish them?

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