



Zimbabwe leg-spinner Graeme Cremer (foreground) throws the ball during a practice session at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The leg-spinner could be a handful in the upcoming series in conditions where the slow bowlers are expected to excel.

Kochi decision not now

Cricket

The Indian Premier League (IPL) governing council has deferred its final decision on Kochi franchise to December 5.

Shashank Manohar, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president, said that the Kochi owners had submitted their reply on Saturday evening to the board's termination notice asking them to resolve their differences. He said the council did not have enough time to review Kochi's response at its meeting in Nagpur on Sunday morning, and will seek the board's lawyers' opinion before taking any decision.

"They submitted a new ownership pattern yesterday," Manohar said at a media conference, immediately after the hour-long meeting. "We had no time to examine it. All of you are aware that everyday we are in court in a legal battle and hence we would like to have the opinion of our legal experts before we take any decision."

As part of the new agreement Rendezvous Sports, the promoters of the franchise, have agreed to shrink their ownership stake to allow the rival investors group to have a bigger say in running of the company, which will be now called Kochi IPL Cricket Pvt. Ltd. "They have

entered into an MoU whereby the stakes of Rendezvous is diluted from 26 per cent to 10 per cent," Manohar said. "They have also given various affidavits which all need to be looked into."

This latest patch-up among the owners is a fresh twist to the long-running saga at the Kochi franchise which has been riven with differences right from its day of inception. The biggest problem has been the ownership pattern with the investors unhappy about the promoters holding 26 per cent of sweat equity. The investors in the consortium -- Anchor Earth, Parinee Developers, Rosy Blue and Film Wave -- hold 74 per cent of the equity. The remaining 26 per cent has been given to the Gaikwad family -- Shailendra, his brother Ravi and their parents plus a few others, all part of Rendezvous Sports World -- as free equity for services rendered in successfully bidding for the franchise.

The league's governing council, at its emergency meeting on October 27, felt Kochi was far from resolving those issues and issued a notice asking both factions to explain why the franchise should not be scrapped.

The chances of both factions reaching a compromise seemed bleak when the investors sent a letter on Wednesday to Manohar, stating that they were withdrawing support to the franchise because of the inability to resolve the problems with the promoters.

Ansars keep dominating

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Ansar and VDP continued their domination of the 34th NCC Bank National Cycling Championships when they won three more gold medals with Bangladesh Rifles winning two at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Ripon Kumar of BDR won the men's Time Trial gold with a timing of 1:28.00 minutes, while the women's Time Trial was won by Ansar's Parul Akter in 1:44.07 minutes.

Both gold of Elimination Race were captured by Ansar, Tarikul Islam winning the men's race and Akashi Sultana the women's.

The last gold of the day went to Shamsul Huda of BDR, in the men's 1200-metre sprint at 1:44.20 minutes.

Chelsea held

INTERNET, Undated

Chelsea failed to move back to the top of the Premier League after they were held to a 1-1 draw by Newcastle United at a freezing St James' Park.

Andy Carroll capitalised on a mix-up in the Chelsea defence to score after just six minutes, only for Salomon Kalou to score a leveller right at the end of the half.

Didier Drogba had a goal disallowed in the second half as the champions began to dominate, but the Magpies held on for a well-earned point.

The Blues move up to second place above Arsenal on goal difference, and are now two points behind leaders Manchester United, while Newcastle move back into the top half of the table.

Chelsea may have avoided losing three league matches in a row for the first time in 11 years, but a lack of security at one end of the pitch and finishing at the other will remain a real concern for manager Carlo Ancelotti.

Bhupathi in doubles final

AFP, London

Indian doubles specialist Mahesh Bhupathi partnered Belarus Max Mirnyi to reach the final of the ATP doubles Finals tournament here on Saturday with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Polish duo Mariusz Fyrstenberg and Marcin Matkowski.

Bhupathi and Mirnyi will play Canada's Daniel Nestor and Nenad Zimonjic of Serbia in Sunday's final after the latter pairing beat American twins Bob and Mike Bryan 6-3, 3-6, 12/10 (in a super tie-break).

Bhupathi, 36, has won four men's grand slam doubles titles -- though he has never won the Australian Open losing twice in the final -- and mixed doubles titles, seven in total, at all the Grand Slam tournaments.

U-17 booters

FROM PAGE 17 Under-17 will face Army Boys School of India in the quarterfinals today.

On Saturday, Bangladesh thrashed Sainik School 7-0 in their last group match, courtesy of a hat-trick from Malek to move to the second round with an all-win record.

Eyes on year-end glory

Roger, Rafa showdown in Tour Finals

Tennis

AFP, London

Roger Federer set up a titanic final showdown with Rafael Nadal at the ATP World Tour Finals after defeating Novak Djokovic 6-1, 6-4 in the semifinals on Saturday.

Federer swept aside third seed Djokovic in emphatic fashion as the world number two produced his fourth successive straight sets victory at the end-of-year event at London's O2 Arena.

The Swiss star will try to land a fifth Tour Finals title on Sunday and, in the process, gain a measure of revenge over Nadal, who has been the sport's dominant force at his expense this year.

Nadal clinched his first appearance in the final after a thrilling 7-6, 3-6, 7-6 win over Andy Murray.

Nadal has won nine Grand Slam titles during his astonishing career but the Spaniard has never triumphed at this prestigious end-of-year event featuring the world's top eight players.

Now he has a golden opportunity to end a remarkable season with one last triumph.

The world number one, who has already won Wimbledon and the French and US Opens this year.

Among their 21 career meetings there have been some incredible encounters, including the 2008 Wimbledon final won by Nadal. This is just

their second match this year and it is the perfect way to finish the ATP season.

Federer said: "It's been a great tournament so far, having not lost a set and beaten so many good players. Today was another great match."

"I'm really looking forward to playing against Rafa tomorrow. Who wouldn't?"

"He's a wonderful player. He's proven himself that he

win. He was the better player.

He's been playing really well in this tournament. I think this is definitely the best tennis he has played throughout the whole year."

There was no doubt Federer went into his semifinal as favourite and he stamped his authority over proceedings from the start.

After holding serve to love, the Swiss won four successive

time the Serb netted a volley.

Five points later the set was over, with Djokovic surely wondering what he could do to stop Federer in this form.

The Serb could at least draw on recent memories of a superb fightback against the 16-time grand slam champion, when he saved two match points to triumph in the semifinals of the US Open.

And he began the second set in determined fashion, holding comfortably for the first time and then forcing a break point with a superb forehand return.

This time it was Federer's turn to make an error on a crucial point, the 29-year-old netting a volley he would have expected to make.

The Swiss' timing was suddenly a bit off but he was still playing some fantastic shots and he set up a chance to break back in the fifth game, which he took when Djokovic guided his passing shot wide.

Federer had three chances to make it four games in a row but Djokovic, who surely knew a break would effectively make it curtains, hung on to move 4-3 ahead.

The pressure was relentless from Federer as he fashioned another two break points in Djokovic's next service game, and this time he took one, powering a forehand return down the line.

That left the second seed serving for the match, and he never looked like making a mistake, polishing off victory in an hour and 20 minutes.



ROGER FEDERER



RAFAEL NADAL

can play on any surface now. The ones who still call him a clay court expert, they still don't know much about tennis.

"I'll try to take it to him, play aggressive, attack his second serve and see how it goes."

Djokovic added: "He was playing unbelievable from the first moment. He deserved to

Eng fight back

FROM PAGE 17

The English skipper scored his 19th Test hundred and fourth against Australia off 224 balls with 15 fours, some of them exquisite drives to the boundaries.

Cook chimed in with his 14th Test century and second against Australia to ram home the advantage over the home attack and was closing in on Ian Botham's highest score of 138 at the Gabba for England.

England, from looking in peril of going one down in the series, had dramatically turned things around to have an outside chance of being the only team who could win on Monday's final day.

"We can't look too far ahead at this stage," Strauss said of winning the Test.

"At this stage we have only got an 88-run lead and we need to push on and make sure that we can get into a decent position on the final day.

"By lunch it should be clearer to where we are and where the game's heading."

England's cause was abetted by three dropped catches in a frustrating day for Australian skipper Ricky Ponting.

Wicketless paceman Mitchell Johnson added to his unhappy Test by putting down Strauss just before lunch with a tough but catchable overhead chance at mid-off when the English skipper was on 69.

Cook was dropped on 103 in a tough tumbling chance by

Peter Siddle at fine leg off Ben Hilfenhaus and then it was Trott who was given a life on 34 when Michael Clarke couldn't hold on to a diving left-handed chance at point.

The last time England scored two centuries in an Ashes innings was in Adelaide in 2006 when Paul Collingwood hit 206 and Kevin Pietersen 158.

Australia's toothless bowlers toiled away without reward on a placid Gabba pitch and Ponting rotated between six bowlers in a vain search of wickets.

Australia have earned a reputation since the retirement of champion bowlers Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne in 2007 of being unable to finish off teams, the latest coming in the one-wicket loss to India at Mohali last month.

The home side's unproductive day in the field coming off a massive innings advantage yet again underlined how much the once-mighty Australians have come back to the field in world cricket after the end of their golden era.

Australia have lost their last three Tests, to Pakistan and India (twice), something that has not happened for almost 22 years and have slipped below England to fifth in the world rankings.

"We are still in the game, no doubt, but we do have to turn it around very quickly because they are only 88 runs ahead at the moment," Australian opener Shane Watson said.

"There's still definitely quite a bit of hope still for us, but we have to turn it around tomorrow morning."

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 260 (Bell 76, Cook 67; Siddle 6-54)
AUSTRALIA: First innings 481 (Hussey 195, Haddin 136, Kaich 50; Finn 6-125, Anderson 2 for 99, Swann 2 for 128)

ENGLAND: Second innings 309 for 1 (Strauss 110, Cook 132 not out, Trott 54 not out; North 1-22)

'Skin surgery of Flower a scare'

AFP, Brisbane

Coach Andy Flower's skin surgery to remove a melanoma had sent a scare through the England team, skipper Andrew Strauss said on Sunday.

Flower missed the second and third days' play of the first Ashes Test in Brisbane to have a melanoma removed from his right cheek.

"All of us have had a bit of a scare on it. We did get tested recently but we may need second opinions on that," Strauss said after scoring his first Ashes Test century in Australia on Sunday's fourth day to get his team out of trouble.

Milan's run

FROM PAGE 17

and Lazio could close the gap to one point if they win on Sunday.

Samp remain in European contention despite an eighth draw in 14 matches.

Despite the loss of two points, Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri was delighted with his team.

"That was one of if not the best game we've played in terms of intensity and the defensive phase," he said.

"We made a mistake at a corner but this can happen, football is like this and you have to accept it, I'm happy with the lads."

Allegri paid special tribute to goalscorer Robinho.

"He's doing very well, other than the goal he had several other chances and created some too."

"We deserved to win but Sampdoria did everything to deny us. We're doing well, the lads are doing great things."

Juventus failed to capitalise on Milan's slip as they were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Fiorentina.

The Old Lady of Turin remain six points behind, although they moved up to third for a day at least ahead of Napoli's trip to Udinese on Sunday.

RESULTS
Sampdoria 1 (Pazzini 59) AC Milan 1 (Robinho 43)
Juventus 1 (Pepe 83) Fiorentina 1 (Motta 4-og)

India take

FROM PAGE 17

game plan was to just stay there and try not to lose too many in the first ten overs."

India's regular captain MS Dhoni was rested along with other top stars such as Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag and Harbhajan Singh for the start of the five-match series.

New Zealand's regular captain Daniel Vettori was also missing due to back stiffness following the three-game Test series between the teams, which India won 1-0 with victory in Nagpur.

Ross Taylor took over Vettori's post, and top scored with 66 as his side struggled to keep up with the required run rate of 5.66 an over.

"We couldn't take early wickets as they did to us," he said. "Kyle Mills and Nathan McCullum got us close but Virat had played well and I think took the game away from us. Hopefully we can pick ourselves up and play well in the next game."

Wicketkeeper and explosive opening batsman Brendon McCullum -- Nathan's brother -- was also absent from the side with back trouble, with Gareth Hopkins taking over duties behind the stumps.

New Zealand chose to bowl after winning the toss as they took into account the Guwahati ground's reputation as a tricky track to bat on early in the day.

The second game of the series takes place in Jaipur on Wednesday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 276 (Vijay 29, Gambhir 38, Kohli 105, Yuvraj 42, Pathan 29; Mills 3-42, Tuffey 2-56, McKay 4-62)

NEW ZEALAND: 236 (Guptill 30, Williamson 25, Taylor 66, Hopkins 16, N McCullum 35, Mills 32; Sreesanth 3-30, Ashwin 3-50, Yuvraj 3-43)
Result: India won by 40 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Virat Kohli.

DIV I cricket

FROM PAGE 17

reached the target with relative ease, racing to 191 for 4 in 41.2 overs. Niaz Murshed made the job all the more easy hammering an unbeaten 114.

At the Jahangirnagar University Ground, Eskaton strolled to the 134-run target in 27 overs losing only four wickets, thanks to a half-century from Mahfuz.

Aussies open Cup

FROM PAGE 17

proved by top-scoring in the final. They were followed by a formidable middle order comprising Dean Jones, Allan Border, Tom Moody, Steve Waugh and allrounder Simon O'Donnell. All were strokeplayers, an important attribute on subcontinent pitches -- generally more batsman-friendly than pitches in England.

The keeper was Greg Dyer -- a safe keeper who might have played more cricket had Ian Healy played in another era -- and he will be remembered for his catch off Mike Gatting's much-maligned reverse sweep in the final.

The bowling was in the hands of Craig McDermott, Bruce Reid, Tim May, Simon O'Donnell and Steve Waugh, who started his career as an allrounder capable of making important contributions with the ball. McDermott finished the tournament as the highest wicket-taker. Off-spinner Peter Taylor was also in the squad, and he was picked for games where a turning pitch called for two spinners. Tim May was the first choice spinner. The attack was a varied and balanced one with McDermott providing raw pace, Reid and O'Donnell offering variety with their left arm pace, Steve Waugh's medium pace mixed with well-disguised slower deliveries, and the spin of May and occasionally Taylor that is a must in subcontinental conditions.

The big surprise of the tournament was that West Indies, the best team in the world of the era, crashed out before the knock-out stage. That blew the tournament wide open, as locals dreamed of an India-Pakistan final when the hosts made it to the semis. Australia beating Pakistan and England beating India put paid to that hope, and instead it was an 'Ashes final' at Eden Gardens. Australia took the trophy, thanks to David Boon's 75 and O'Donnell and Waugh's economical bowling. It was, as is now known, the first of many.

All roads lead

FROM PAGE 17

an impressive record against Real scoring in three out of the last four victories over Madrid including a brace in the infamous 6-2 win at the Bernabeu two seasons ago.

"Real will come to Camp Nou with revenge in mind," said Messi. "Since the 6-2 at the Bernabeu I guess they have a real desire to beat us and this season they have strengthened with the new signings and (Jose) Mourinho."

Portuguese ace Ronaldo has also been in sensational form scoring a hat-trick in Real's 5-1 win over Athletic Bilbao in their last league match and has 15 league goals to top the goalscoring charts ahead of Messi.

"It is nonsense just to talk about a duel between myself and (Lionel) Messi," said Ronaldo. "I am not obsessed about scoring against Barcelona."

Ronaldo can expect a hostile reception at Camp Nou having infuriated Barca's Spanish World Cup winner Andres Iniesta last season by accusing him of diving and recently had a spat with Barca's Spanish midfielder Sergi Busquets in Portugal's recent 4-0 friendly win over

world champions Spain.

Real duo Iker Casillas and Sergio Ramos are seasoned campaigners in this fixture as are Barcelona trio Carles Puyol, Xavi and Victor Valdes.

However, for others it will be a first taste of the Clasico.

Real's new signings Angel di Maria and Ricardo Carvalho along with German internationals Sami Khedira and Mesut Ozil are set to experience the Clasico for the first time, as will Mourinho.

For Barcelona, Spain's World Cup winning striker David Villa, a 40-million-euro signing from Valencia, is set for his first clash with Real in Barca's colours and arrives in a rich vein of form with four goals in his last four league matches.

Winning the first Clasico has proved a good omen in the past and in the last six seasons the victor has gone on to be crowned champions at the end of the season.

We are here

FROM PAGE 17

played a Test was back in September 2005.

The visitors take on a Bangladesh Cricket Board XI at the BKSP today, their only practice match ahead of the one-day series against the Tigers.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Kennel call
 - 4 Binges
 - 8 Unkempt one
 - 12 Zodiac feline
 - 13 Out of the storm
 - 14 Gambling game
 - 15 Pigskin
 - 17 2.54 centime-
 - 18 Three-man vessel?
 - 19 Burn sluggishly
 - 21 Exhibited ennu
 - 24 Singer DiFranco
 - 25 Punk-rock subgenre
 - 26 Tier
 - 28 Tender
 - 32 Coastal bird
 - 34 Talk on and on
 - 36 Ripped
 - 37 Drew a tattoo?
 - 39 Grand Cherokee, for ex.
- DOWN**
- 1 TV alien
 - 2 Old Olds-mobile
 - 3 Fancy maneuvering
 - 4 Talk on and on
 - 5 Chicken-link
 - 6 Solidifies
 - 7 Alabama city
 - 8 Mountain-top access
 - 9 Give for a while
 - 10 Never again?
 - 11 Physician Niels
 - 16 Large cask
 - 20 Yoko of music
 - 21 Bigfoot's cousin
 - 22 "So be it"
 - 23 Pooch
 - 27 Existed
 - 29 Sturdy place to stand
 - 30 Sea eagle
 - 31 Walter Army Medical Center
 - 33 1950s sitcom family
 - 35 Clear the tables
 - 38 Susan of "L.A. Law"
 - 40 Whirlpool
 - 43 Farther down the page
 - 45 Scooted
 - 46 Timber wolf
 - 47 Press agent?
 - 48 Indiana city
 - 49 Hen pen
 - 53 Praise in verse
 - 54 Stannum
 - 55 Greek vowel

Solution time: 25 mins.

A	B	E	C	O	I	L	S	O	L	E		
D	A	M	A	F	R	O	A	V	E	R		
O	B	I	S	T	A	T	E	F	A	I	R	
S	A	R	A	H	S	E	A					
F	A	I	R	W	A	Y	S					
A	R	C	H	S	M	O	T	E	C	U	E	
K	E	E	P	L	A	I	F	A	I	R		
E	A	S	E	S	D	R	E	A				
T	O	O	L	I	N	G						
F	A	I	R	I	T	A	L	E	R	I	O	
O	L	I	O	T	W	I	T	O	N	O		
B	A	I	L		O	L	D	S		N	E	D

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12			13					14			
15			16					17			
		18				19		20			
21	22			23		24					
25			26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36		
37			38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45		
46	47	48			49		50				
51				52		53			54	55	
56				57					58		