



MCG curator Cameron Hodgkins (2nd from front) and groundstaff pull off the covers on Tuesday to reveal the pitch on which the fourth Test between England and Australia will be played from Sunday.

**Khawaja on standby for Ponting**

AFP, Melbourne

Australia called up uncapped batsman Usman Khawaja Tuesday as cover for captain Ricky Ponting, who is nursing a broken finger ahead of the crunch Melbourne Ashes Test.Selectors said they were showing an "abundance of caution" in adding Khawaja to the squad, adding they were confident Ponting will play in the clash against England starting Sunday.

"While the NSP (National Selectors Panel) are confident Ricky Ponting will be available for the Boxing Day Test, through an abundance of caution we have named Usman Khawaja as the standby player," chief selector Andrew Hilditch said.

"Usman richly deserves this opportunity following his excellent form at domestic level last season and continuing on this season."

Pakistan-born Khawaja, 24, who plays for New South Wales, is yet to break into the team after becoming the first Muslim to be selected for an Australian Test squad in June.

Ponting has pledged to play in Melbourne despite suffering a small fracture to his left little finger while trying to take a catch during Australia's crushing win in Perth, which levelled the series at 1-1.

Khawaja, who will join the squad on Wednesday evening, earlier said he was ready to play if called upon.

"I've said this before, I think I was ready when I was six years old," he said. "I think everyone's ready to play for Australia."

**BU reluctant**

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Their club premises.

Some eight players from different clubs including Abahani and Mohammedan are yet to overcome the test and that means they are not eligible to take part in the Bangladesh League until they are declared fit through the beep test according to the bylaws.

Eight players -- Awudu Ibrahim (Abahani), Emeka Christian and Emeka Lucky (Mohammedan), Mostafa Kaba (Arambagh), James Moga (Muktijoddha), Paul Mac James (Rahmatganj), Jerry Odesko (Ctg Mohammedan) and Kingsly (Farashganj) took part in the beep test earlier but they failed to pass it.

**Bichel's day**

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Two wickets left.

Who should walk in then but Andy Bichel? The bowling hero wasn't about to let his sterling efforts go to waste.

Through an amazing partnership in which Bevan nudged and Bichel swung, Australia went within fourteen runs off victory with two overs left.

Hussain threw the ball to Anderson, and Bichel promptly hit the second ball for six and the third for four, deciding the matter. Off the fourth ball of the last over Bevan smashed a four and sealed the deal, ending on an unbeaten 74 while Bichel remained not out on 34.

Australia had overcome the only real challenge they had come across so far in the tournament, and would go on to win without having to work half as hard as they did in this match.

**'It's home advantage'**

AFP, Melbourne

England opener Alastair Cook Tuesday played down a growing row over Australia's move to change pitches for the vital Melbourne Ashes Test, saying they were simply exploiting "home advantage".

Cook shrugged "you'd expect everyone to do it" after news that the Melbourne Cricket Ground was preparing a green pitch that will favour Australia's pace attack and offer little turn for England spinner Graeme Swann.

"That is the beauty of home conditions, isn't it?" Cook told journalists in Perth, before the team's departure for Melbourne.

"You can prepare a pitch to hopefully suit the home side. That is what we try and do in England in certain cases. There is no reason I would expect Australia not to do it."

British media have accused the Melbourne Cricket Ground of changing pitches after Australia's emphatic 267-run win on Perth's green deck levelled the series at 1-1 with two games to play.

But Melbourne Cricket Club chief executive Stephen Gough said the decision to use the alternative pitch was made before the Perth Test started last week.

"I'm glad we made the decision early," Gough told The Australian newspaper.

"I'd hate to think if we released it after Perth whether anyone would think we were up to something. I'm not surprised with the conspiracy theory, given the success in Perth."

The Ashes, cricket's oldest and most anticipated international series, has a history of pitch intrigue after The Oval prepared a surprisingly dry track for the decisive match of the 2009 series, which England won.

"The pitch is out of four control and that's the beauty of cricket, that conditions change from week to week and it's how you adapt to those that determines how successful you are," Cook said.

"The challenge is making sure we are ready and adapted to those conditions."

Cook also backed England to bounce back quickly from their disappointment in Perth, when their previously dominant form wilted in the face of a resurgent Australia.

The Essex left-hander scored a ground-record 235 not out in Brisbane and 148 in Adelaide before succumbing for just 32 and 13 in the third Test as Australia's fast bowlers ran riot.

"All the work we have done so far on this tour has given us a lot of confidence," Cook said. "We scored runs heavily against the bowling attack before and we can do it again. We have to trust ourselves."

Cricket Australia chief James Sutherland was confident of attracting 91,000 fans when the game starts on Boxing Day, setting a new record attendance for a single day of Test cricket.

A total of 90,800 attended the same venue in February 1961 for the fifth Test against West Indies.

"The cricket gods are smiling on us all," Sutherland told journalists in Melbourne.

"I did for a moment think that there was a possibility that we would come into this and the Ashes would already be decided," he added.

**Sachin back in ODI fold**

AFP, New Delhi

Sachin Tendulkar was on Tuesday named in India's one-day squad for a five-match series in South Africa, ending a self-imposed 10-month lay-off from limited-overs cricket.

Tendulkar, 37, decided to rest from one-day internationals after smashing an unprecedented double-century against South Africa in Gwalior on February 24.

He missed 22 one-dayers this year, but a return was imminent for the away series in South Africa to prepare for the World Cup in South Asia in February-April.

Tendulkar, the world's leading run-getter, became the first batsman to score 50 Test hundreds during the opening Test at Centurion on Sunday.

The star batsman was included in a 16-man squad for the limited-overs contests which begin after the three-Test series ends on January 6.

Tendulkar is unlikely to feature in the lone Twenty20 game in Durban on January 9

because he does not play the shortest form at the international level.

The five one-dayers will be played in Durban (January 12), Johannesburg (January 15), Cape Town (January 18), Port Elizabeth (January 21) and Centurion (January 23).

**SQUAD**

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ashish Nehra, Praveen Kumar, Munaf Patel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Yusuf Pathan, Piyush Chawla, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth.

**Pacific clinch badminton title**

Sports Reporter

Pacific Associates Badminton Club emerged champions in the Knit-Concern Second Division Badminton League that concluded yesterday at the Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Pacific Associates Badminton Club, which earned 14 points in 12-team point table, were awarded Tk 50,000 while runners-up Rockland Badminton Club, with 12 points, received Tk 30,000.

Jahid Ahsan Russel, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on youth and sports, distributed prizes among the winners while sponsor representative Mohammad Golam Faruk Dewan and federation officials were present.

**For Shakib**

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Been left out too. Flintoff had retired from professional cricket last September. Also missing from the 2011 pool is the retired Australian pair of Matthew Hayden and Glenn McGrath, who played in the previous editions of the IPL after ending their careers.

Jacques Kallis and Muttiah Muralitharan, who featured significantly for Royal Challengers Bangalore and Chennai in the first three seasons, find themselves in the \$300,000 bracket. Zaheer Khan and Yusuf Pathan are the big Indian names in that list, which also includes Andrew Symonds, Shaun Tait, Kumar Sangakkara, and Angelo Mathews.

The season is set to go ahead with 10 teams and 74 matches as originally planned, since the BCCI is not likely to move the Supreme Court after it lost High Court appeals against the stay orders granted to the termination of Punjab and Rajasthan. The auction plan sets at rest speculation that the auction would be delayed by the various court cases the IPL is currently fighting.

**Nepal crush**

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16th minute.

It was a fine cross from Lama down the right, which was headed in powerfully by the Nepal captain for her ninth goal of the campaign.

Bangladesh though kept their spirits up, regrouped and stole some possession with neat passing in the midfield. However, the good work in the middle was not enough to pose a serious threat to the Nepal goal.

On the contrary, the hosts could have gone two down, but the crossbar came to the rescue once and later a defender cleared one off the line to keep the deficit within reach.

The second half saw Jamuna and Lama find more space inside the box as Bangladesh tried to press for an equaliser which gave Nepal the opening for a second goal on the 71st minute. Taking advantage of a defensive lapse, Lama drilled the ball straight to the goalkeeper Sabina who made a sprawling save on the first attempt but was helpless on the rebound. With that, Lama's tally in the tournament reached eleven.

Her partner, Jamuna sealed the match five minutes later with her second of the day and 10th of the tournament. Collecting the ball from Dipa Adhiikari, Jamuna sped past a defender, wrongfooted the keeper before putting it calmly into the back of the net to give the Nepalese a richly deserved win.

For Bangladesh it was back to the drawing board, a moment to reflect on their achievement and a reminder that the women's game needs to have a serious approach if they are to challenge for the supremacy in South Asia.

**Kallis escapes unharmed**

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa star batsman Jacques Kallis crashed his car into a gate in the early hours of Tuesday but escaped unharmed, a team spokesman told AFP, denying that alcohol was involved.

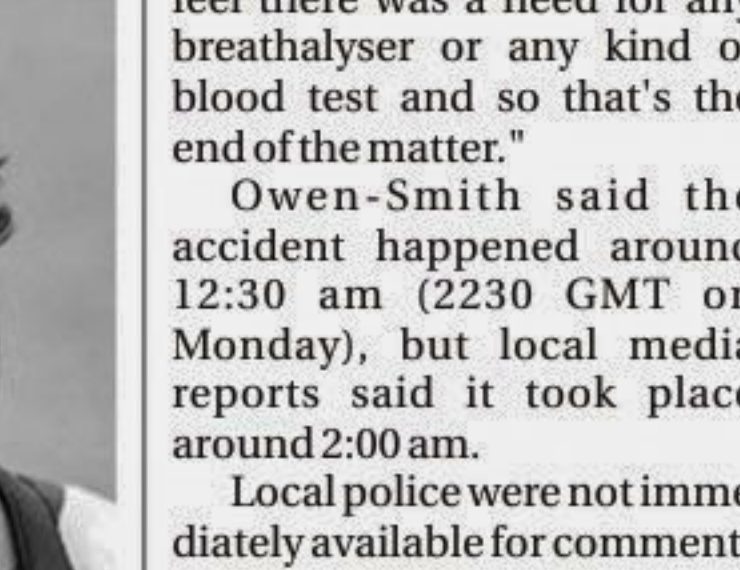
Kallis, who scored his first Test double century in a victory over India that finished Monday, will not miss any Proteas practice or matches as a result of the accident in Cape Town, said team spokesman Michael Owen-Smith.

"Alcohol was not an issue in [the crash]," said Owen-Smith.

"The [local] police didn't feel there was a need for any breathalyser or any kind of blood test and so that's the end of the matter."

Owen-Smith said the accident happened around 12:30 am (22:30 GMT on Monday), but local media reports said it took place around 2:00 am.

Local police were not immediately available for comment.



SACHIN TENDULKAR

**2010: Spot-fixing the blemish**

Cricket

REUTERS, New Delhi

Sachin Tendulkar set a slew of records and England, who gave the game to the world, finally won a World Cup but spot-fixing may well be the lasting cricketing memory of a tumultuous year.

Tranquillity is a rare thing in Pakistan cricket and there was considerable bad blood in the team that returned after a shambolic tour of Australia where they lost all three test matches, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 game.

As part of its house-cleaning process, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) banned three former captains -- Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf and Shoaib Malik -- and fined several players including Shahid Afridi, who featured in a bizarre ball-biting incident in Perth.

The team reached even lower depths when a British media report alleged that some players had been bribed to bowl predetermined no-balls during a Test match in England in August.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) subsequently suspended the then Test captain Salman Butt and pacers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir.

The ICC probed the suspect scoring pattern of a Pakistan-England one-day international as well but found no "compelling evidence" against any player.

The PCB, however, could not breathe easy.

In November, wicketkeeper Zulqarnain Haider disappeared in Dubai, where the team were playing South Africa, and resurfaced in London, seeking asylum and saying his life was under threat from match-fixers.

"Cricket in Pakistan faces its biggest crisis and so does the country. We are in a mess," said Imran Khan, arguably the best captain Pakistan ever had.

**TENDULKAR'S RECORDS**

Across the border in India, things were rosier and the seemingly ageless Tendulkar was very much in the thick of things.

The 37-year-old batsman brought up the first double century in one-day cricket's history against South Africa in February and completed 14,000 Test runs against Australia in October.

He rounded off the year by becoming the first cricketer to score 50 Test hundreds, while on tour against South Africa as India warmed up for the World Cup which they will host with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh from Feb. 19.

Recognition of Tendulkar's achievements came in the form of the ICC Cricketer of the Year award. The Indian Air Force also named him its honorary group captain.

Former Indian Premier League (IPL) commissioner Lalit Modi was suspended after allegations of corruption in cricket's richest event ensnared top politicians and Bollywood stars.

The IPL, however, remained a hot property and two new franchises -- Kochi and Pune -- were sold for \$703 million, more than the worth of the eight original franchises put together.

In the Twenty20 World Cup, Paul Collingwood's England comprehensively beat Australia in the final in Barbados to win the country's first global trophy in limited-overs cricket.

**MURALIDARAN'S FAREWELL**

Australia's decline was evident in other formats as well as they slumped to fifth place in the ICC Test rankings after a 2-0 whitewash in India.

**TENDULKAR'S RECORDS**

England's hopes of beating them in the Ashes series rose when they took a 1-0 lead after the first two Tests but Australia stormed back to level at 1-1 with a win in Perth.

Sri Lanka off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran dropped the curtain on his illustrious Test career, taking his 800th wicket off his last delivery amid intense drama.

Chris Gayle scored the lone Test triple century of the year, for West Indies against Sri Lanka, Vangipurappu Laxman braved a bad back to lead India to a one-wicket victory over Australia in a Mohali Test and Peter Siddle sizzled with an Ashes hat-trick in the Brisbane Test.

Australia's Brett Lee announced his Test retirement, while England's talismanic all-rounder Andrew Flintoff and New Zealand's tearaway pacer Shane Bond quit the game altogether.

Cricket made its Asian Games debut in Guangzhou where Bangladesh won gold but India did not deem it necessary to send a team.

The game also underwent experiments. Split-innings one-dayers were trialled in England and Australia, the ICC announced new Test and one-day championships, while the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) tried out a pink ball and advocated day-night Tests.

**Butt's time petition**

AFP, Karachi

from Britain's Crown Prosecution Service, which received two reports from Scotland Yard police who raided the Pakistani team's hotel in London.

British newspaper the News of the World claimed several Pakistani players took money to obey orders from an alleged book-maker Mazhar Majeed at Lord's.

Salman said British-based lawyer Yasin Patel will fight his case in Doha and other lawyers helped him send a reply to the ICC.

"Patel will be my lawyer but we want to settle the Crown Prosecution case first, if it is initiated, and then fight the ICC charges," said Salman.

Aamer and Asif do not intend to seek to delay the ICC case.

"We want to attend the Doha hearing," Aamer's lawyer Shahid Karim told AFP.

"Maybe Salman's lawyer needs time to prepare for the case but we want to attend the January hearing."

Salman last week reiterated his innocence.

"I have not done anything such as this [spot fixing] in all my life or cricketing career," Salman told Sky television. "I hope I will be cleared and will play for my country again."

**MSC suffer a jolt**

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The institute's cricket ground.

Bating first, the Dhamondi giants made 232-9 from 50 overs with Rony Talukder making 69 and Farhad Hossain cracking a late-order 45.

Tapash Baisya and Alauddin Babu made sure of no drama as they took the first five wickets for only 48 runs. Tapash ended with three for 28 while Alauddin, Saqlain Sajib and Farhad took two wickets each.

**BIMAN-SURJO TARUN**

Biman completed their second consecutive win with an eight-wicket mauling of Surjo Tarun at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Bating first, Surjo Tarun collapsed in a heap after a 103-run third wicket stand between Junaed Siddiqui and Rajin Saleh. They lost their last eight wickets for only 36 runs, to be bowled out for 154 in 41.4 overs. Left-arm spinner Elias Sunny ran through the middle and lower orders, picking up five wickets.

Mushfiqur Rahim smashed an unbeaten 77 off 87 balls (seven 4s, two 6s) as Biman romped home in only 33.3 overs.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**PRIME DOLESHWAR:** 259-7 in 50 overs (Nadif 73, Zahid 56; Shuvashish 4-63)

MSC: 259-9 in 50 overs (Tamim 70, Moeen 59; Nizamuddin 4-52, Rezaul 3-38)

Result: Match tied.

**ABAHANI:** 232-9 in 50 overs (Rony 69, Farhad 45; Riaz 3-45)

**BKSP:** 113 all out in 41.3 overs (Ashiqul 47; Tapash 3-28)

Result: Abahani won by 119 runs.

**SURJO TARUN:** 154 all out in 41.4 overs (Junaed 60, Rajin 45; Elias 5-36)

**BIMAN:** 155-2 in 33.3 overs (Rahim 77 not out; Mizanur 1-7)

Result: Biman won by eight wickets.

**Windies give preliminary WC squad**

AFP, St John's

West Indies on Tuesday named their 30-man preliminary squad for the 2011 World Cup which takes place in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh from February 19-April 2.

**PLAYERS**

Lionel Baker, Adrian Barath, Carlton Baugh Jr, Suleiman Benn, Dave Bernard Jr, Tino Best, Devendra Bishoo, Darren Bravo, Dwayne Bravo, Jonathan Carter, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Kirk Edwards, Chris Gayle, Ryan Hinds, Jason Holder, Anthony Martin, Nikita Miller, Nelson Pascal, Kieron Pollard, Kieran Powell, Denesh Ramdin, Rav Rampaul, Kemar Roach, Andre Russell, Darren Sammy, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Shane Shillingford, Devon Smith, Gavin Tonge, Devon Thomas.

**CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer**

**ACROSS**

**33** Sun (Pref.)

**54** Type measures ending abbr.

**1** Stylish

**5** News, for short

**9** Honest politician

**12** Tramcar contents

**13** Coach

**14** Last (Abbr.)

**15** Unoriginal one

**16** Burden

**17** Afternoon affair

**18** Saga-cious

**19** Blackbird

**20** Part of a Batman costume

**21** Violinist's need

**23** Regret

**25** Some ducks

**28** Makes into confetti

**32** Berate

**34** Part of a Muse's strings

**36** Beat

**37** Web address

**38** Discoverer's cry

**39** Apple Super Bowls

**42** Hooter

**44** Dweeb

**48** "Hail!"

**49** Vacillate

**50** Concept

**51** Flop

**52** Large brown seaweed

**53** Gel in a petri dish

**11** List-ending

**20** Formal

**22** Sequence

**24** "Yeah"

**25** Kreskin's claim

**26** Lemieux milieu

**27** Pooch

**29** Shade source

**30** Conk out

**31** Scale member

**35** Sullen look

**36** Coral producers

**39** Test the waters

**40** Egg

**41** Cincinnati team

**43** Corduroy ridge

**45** Nervous

**46** Back

**47** Challenge

**49** Go downhill fast

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	
34						35		36		
						37			38	
39	40	41				42	43		44	45
48						49			50	
51						52			53	
54						55			56	

**CRYPTOQUIP**

H P H M Y L A C P M Y C P K R L Q P M N

C X K R G A A P C C C Z G G H

L S S G B N X P K S P A L B G A N L X K

C N L N G : " X K Z X L K L X K Z X L K L . "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN SOMEONE SLICES A PIECE OF FRUIT AND THEN SAMPLES IT, I WOULD CALL IT CUT-AND-TRIED.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals N