Bracken quits

Cricket

AFP, *Sydney*

Australian limited-overs specialist Nathan Bracken announced his retirement from cricket in Sydney on Saturday.

The New South Wales left-armer, a key member of Australia's World Cup-winning team in 2007 in the West Indies, played 116 one-day internationals and five Tests, plus 19 Twenty20 internationals.

NATHAN BRACKEN

A reliable seamer who excelled in the shorter forms of the game, Bracken played his last game for Australia against England at Nottingham in September 2009 and cited knee injuries for his decision to call it quits at the age of 33.

Bracken said he had investigated ways to continue playing, but received medical advice that he should retire.

"I really have enjoyed my cricket both internationally and domestically, but unfortunately knee injuries have taken their toll," Bracken said.

"I have had a strong rehabilitation from my last operation and have also looked at altering my bowling action to reduce any further damage in my knee and which would have enabled me to continue playing, but it hasn't responded.

"My doctor has advised that I may require further surgery to stabilise my knee and to enable me to have good use of the knee in the future, but to continue playing first-class cricket is now not an option that I have."

Bracken made his debut for Australia in a one-dayer against the West Indies in 2001 and took 174 wickets at 24.36 in ODIs.

He was the Australian ODI player of the year in 2009.

CARER PROFILE

TESTS					
Matches	Runs	Bat ave	Wkts	Bowl ave	B/B
5	70	17.5	12	42.08	4-48
ODIs					
Matches	Runs	Bat ave	Wkts	Bowl ave	B/B
116	199	11.7	174	24.36	5-47
T20s					
Matches	Runs	Bat ave	Wkts	Bowl ave	B/BEcon
19	15	5	19	23.05	3-116.97

PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan batsman Mohammad Hafeez spreads his arms for joy after scoring the run that gave him his first ODI century in the third ODI against New Zealand at Christchurch yesterday.

Pakistan draw level

Cricket

AFP, *Christchurch*

A maiden century by Mohammad Hafeez and a blistering 65 by Shahid Afridi set up Pakistan for a 43-run win over New Zealand in their one-day cricket international Saturday.

The batting heroics, which rescued Pakistan from a disastrous start, were complemented by the fielding exploits of Umar Akmal who featured in three crucial New Zealand dismissals.

The result levelled the six-match series at 1-1, with one game washed out and three to play.

It was a sharp turnaround in fortunes from the first match, which New Zealand won by nine wickets with more than 32 overs to spare.

They showed the hallmarks of that domination in Christchurch when they won the toss, put Pakistan into bat on a green-tinged wicket, and had them two for eight by the fourth over.

But from there Pakistan worked their way up to take control, compiling 293-7 in their 50 overs, with Afridi starring in a 126-run charge over the last 10 overs.

New Zealand made a bold reply and were ahead of Pakistan in the run rate until the final slog, but they lost wickets at regular intervals and were hanging on grimly at the end to be 250-9.

They were unable to take advantage of the short boundaries at AMI Stadium which Afridi plundered at will in a telling innings that included five fours and five sixes and saw him reach his half-century in only 19 deliveries.

The stage for the late charge was set by Hafeez, who was partnered by Younis Khan in a 48-run stand for the third wicket, then featured in a 94-run partnership with Misbahul Haq before putting on 52 with Umar Akmal.

After Tim Southee, the form bowler for New Zealand this season, removed Ahmed Shehzad and Kamran Akmal early, Hafeez turned the tables on the New Zealand bowlers.

He belted two fours off Southee's third over, then a four and six off Hamish Bennett's opening over as he worked all corners of the boundary untroubled by the New Zealand bowlers who had difficulty maintaining their lines in blustery conditions.

Hafeez, who survived a dropped catch by Brendon McCullum when on 49, reached his century in the 42nd over, cutting New Zealand spin debutant Luke Woodcock to point for a single.

But he was undone on 115 two overs later when he sent a top edge to Ross Taylor at midwicket while trying to hit Kyle Mills out of the ground.

At the height of Pakistan's late onslaught Afridi and Umar Akmal put on 69 in 4.2 overs before both were removed by Bennett who returned the figures of two for 54 while Southee took two for 57 and Mills two for 61.

The New Zealand batsmen were unable to find the boundaries with similar ease to the Pakistanis in part because of Umar Akmal's fielding.

He caught opener Jamie How (24) with a catch on the boundary while looking into the sinking sun, leapt in the air and landed just inside the rope to catch Scott Styris and stop a six, and ran out McCullum with a pin-point throw from backward point.

How and Guptill (39) gave New Zealand a sound start to their innings but while the New Zealand batsmen were able to get starts no one was capable of establishing a sound innings. Styris top scored with 46.

For Pakistan Umar Gul took two for 31, Wahab Riaz two for 43 and Sohail Tanvir two for 56.

The fourth match in the series will be played in Napier on Tuesday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 293 for 7 (Hafeez 115, Afridi 65, U. Akmal 44, Misbah 35; Bennett 2-54, Southee 2-57, Mills 2-61)

NEW ZEALAND: 250 for 9 (Styris 46, Williamson 42, Guptill 39; Gul 2-33, Riaz 2-43, Tanvir 2-56)

Result: Pakistan won by 43 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Hafeez.

ICC refuses BCCI's plea

PTI, *New Delhi*

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has rejected the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) plea to reconsider its decision of shifting the February 27 World Cup match between India and England out of the historic Eden Gardens.

According to reliable sources in the Indian board, ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat informed BCCI president Shashank Manohar about the parent body's decision.

It has been learnt that the ICC has stuck to its stand and is not ready to consider CAB's appeal that it will hand over the stadium to the ICC on February 7.

"Yes, the BCCI has forwarded the ICC's e-mail which states that they have rejected our plea. As far as we are concerned we are ready to host matches.

Ricky boost for Aussies

PTI, *Melbourne*

In an 'encouraging' news ahead of the World Cup, Ricky Ponting is said to be recovering fast from his finger injury but team physio Alex Kountouris is cautious about taking Australian skipper back to the nets.

Ponting, who broke his finger during the miserable Ashes series, was assessed by Melbourne specialist Greg Hoy, who has advised Kountouris to step up his rehabilitation.

"We saw the specialist yesterday and he was reasonably happy with how Ricky is going. It's an encouraging sign. We'll see what happens in the next week or two," Kountouris said.

FIFA windfall

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Meanwhile, 1000 footballs have been gifted to the Bangladesh Football federation by the Korean Football Federation. The BFF president Kazi Salauddin in his recent visit to Korea, where he watched the Korea v Iran friendly, had asked his Korean counterpart for the balls.

The only thing Sachin missing is Cup glory

REUTERS, *Mumbai*

ICC Cricket World Cup 2011

Over the last two decades, there is very little missing from Sachin Tendulkar's list of achievements as a batsman but the absence of a World Cup in his trophy cabinet continues to rankle the Indian run-machine.

The 37-year-old, with more than 32,000 runs and 97 centuries in international cricket, came closest to ending that quest when he was the highest scorer in the 2003 World Cup in South Africa, where Australia beat India in the final.

The February 19-April 2 World Cup in the sub-continent represents, in all probability, Tendulkar's last chance to set the record straight and the batsman is all too aware of the event's importance.

"I still want to achieve something and everyone knows that," a smiling Tendulkar said at an award ceremony on Friday, adding that India's rise to number one in the world Test rankings has given him confidence to believe a Cup victory was possible.

"To get there was not easy, we had to work very hard," he added. "There were lots of challenges but we stood together, backing each other, trusting each other and achieved various things as a team.

"When we got there [in 2009] many people thought that it was maybe a matter of 30-40 days as the South Africa series (2010) was coming up and no one expected us to do well to be honest.

"After losing the first Test in Nagpur, we got to hear that soon we will lose the number one spot. But here I am standing today after almost a year and we are still number one. To get there is wonderful but to stay there for a year in this competitive era is just fantastic."

India are currently number two in the one-day rankings and Tendulkar singled out coach Gary Kirsten for special praise for the team's improved performance.

"Gary Kirsten has brought a remarkable change in our side," Tendulkar said about the former South Africa opener.

"I found the atmosphere in the dressing room quite different and that has brought all the changes. I think all batsmen have performed well since 2007."

No matter if Jiang snores

AFP, *Melbourne*

China's Li Na delivered a touching tribute to her husband and coach, Jiang Shan, after her heartbreaking loss to Kim Clijsters in the Australian Open final on Saturday.

Li, who earlier in the tournament raised laughs by talking about Jiang's snoring and how she likes spending money on his credit card, told the crowd that she didn't really mean it.

"I made a lot of jokes about him but it doesn't matter if you're fat or skinny, handsome or ugly, I will always follow you and always love you," she said, after her three-set loss.

Jiang is credited with coaxing Li back to tennis after a two-year break. Li also fought hard with Chinese authorities to let Jiang coach her, a move which paid dividends when she became the first Chinese to reach a Grand Slam final.

'Rana inspired us'

FROM PAGE 16

match. The atmosphere was great after defeating India and the team was pumped up and believed in winning matches.

DSS: Any frustrating part of the 2007 World Cup?

MM: I bowled brilliantly in the first round picking up wickets regularly. I thought of ending the tournament with at least 15 or 16 wickets, but I didn't get any wickets in the second round. I was getting frustrated but our coach (Dav Whatmore) asked me to keep patience. I ended the tournament with nine wickets.

DSS: So recall your best memory.

MM: I don't have anything from the 2003 World Cup as we played very poorly. In 2007, just a day before our first match against India, (Manzarul Islam) Rana passed away in an accident and the whole of Bangladesh was mourning his loss.

Even we were very upset for losing him like this.

When we won the match next day, we dedicated our win to Rana. He was our inspiration for winning. I won't call it a sweet memory because we lost Rana, but definitely I will always remember that day.

DSS: Your expectations from the 2011 World Cup…

MM: The Bangladesh cricket team have grown a winning habit. They are capable of playing very well against big teams.

It will be tough to reach the second round, but I think they are good enough of doing it. We have the advantage of home conditions.

If the players can hold their nerve and support each other they have a good of reaching far in the tournament. I wish them good luck.

Ugliness

FROM PAGE 16

Most of the traffic after that was bound for the Arambagh goal but to no avail, while the Motijheel outfit mustered in winning a freekick from a dangerous position on the edge of the box, but as is most often the case with free-kicks in the league, it was wasted.

Canada want visa issue solved

AFP, *Toronto*

ICC Cricket World Cup 2011

Canada have pleaded with the International Cricket Council (ICC) to help their three Pakistan-born players obtain visas to enter India for the World Cup which gets underway on February 19.

Vice-captain Rizwan Cheema, Khurram Chohan and Hamza Tariq are all still waiting for their India visas.

The delay has prompted Cricket Canada to demand that the schedule, which has the team playing four of their six group games in India, be altered so that matches are switched to co-hosts Bangladesh and Sri Lanka if the problem persists.

In a letter to ICC president Sharad Pawar, Cricket Canada president Ranjit Saini requested that all efforts be made to solve the impasse.

"We seek your kind help and attention to this matter in assisting our players to obtain their visa in Dubai, Dhaka or Colombo," said Saini.

"We also do hope that ICC have contingency plans to ensure that the matches are played elsewhere if the visa is not processed on time or rejected all together."

The Canada squad will spend 10 days in Dubai in a training camp before the tournament begins.

In Dubai they will play warm-up matches against Ireland and Afghanistan before taking on Bangladesh and England in Bangladesh in further warm-up clashes.

Canada are in Group A at the World Cup along with holders Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

Their first match is on February 20 against Sri Lanka at Hambantota.

Stats tell a different story?

AFP, *Melbourne*

Novak Djokovic believes an extra day's rest won't work against him in Sunday's Australian Open final against Andy Murray, despite the statistics suggesting otherwise.

The Serbian world number three was the first player into the final after conquering Roger Federer in Thursday's semi, and was followed into the decider a day later by the Scottish fifth seed.

For the last three years, the man who has played his semifinal second has gone on to win the Australian title. Murray, Roger Federer and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga have all fallen victim to the Thursday curse.

But Djokovic said he did not believe that gave Murray an edge over him in the best-of-five set decider.

"It doesn't necessarily mean that the guy who is playing the second semifinal will win the tournament," Djokovic said on Saturday.

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

ACROSS

1 Small plateau
5 Banned pesticide
8 Division word
12 Andy's pal
13 "— -la-la!"
14 — -do-well
15 Sucker
17 Hardly colorful
18 Single
19 Figures of speech
21 Speak (out) impulsively
24 Advertise
25 Old Italian money
26 Reinvested money
30 "I — Camera"
31 One of Donald Duck's nephews
32 "— got it!"
33 Something retained from before
35 On the briny
36 Smell
37 Angry dog's sound
38 Group of fish
41 Summer mo.
42 Tackled weeds
43 Triangular pastry
48 Soprano's solo
49 Salamander
50 Easter flower
51 Hospital section
52 Two, in Tijuana
53 Staffer

DOWN

1 Chart
2 Ostrich's cousin
3 "Help!"
4 Off the boat
5 Peace symbol
6 Female deer
7 Michael Jackson classic
8 Deep reddish blue
9 Infamous lyre player
10 Squad
11 Spheres
16 Can. prov.
20 As required
21 Mediocre
22 Long car, for short
23 Caspian Sea feeder
24 Strength
26 Staged a mutiny
27 Passport endorsement
28 Always
29 Authentic
31 Extinct bird
34 Thingamajig
35 Luanda's land
37 Pistol
38 "Pygmalion" writer
39 Cat of "Iron Chef"
40 Estate recipient
41 — and crafts
44 Venusian vessel?
45 Half of XIV
46 Bygone days, in bygone days
47 "Catcher in the —"

Solution time: 21 mins.

T	U	G		S	H	A	L	T		R	O	E
A	S	A		T	O	R	A	H		E	G	G
J	E	S	S	A	M	I	N	E		E	R	A
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C	O	M	M	I	T		E	E	L			
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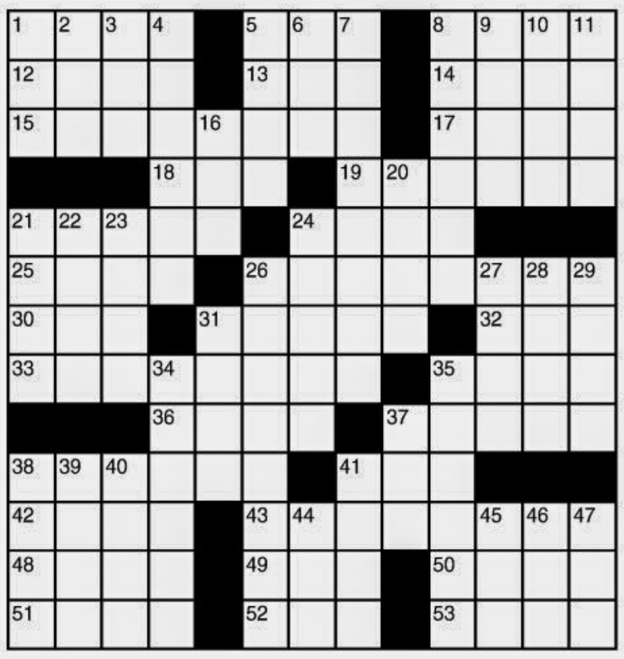

CRYPTOQUIP

K EBOOZEV CRX ESBAOJZI SCR ZRAX SIVCJV EZ DBST. CWJVI CAA, JTVIV KE C EJCJBV ZW AKDKJCJKZRE.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A FELLOW LAUNCHES SOME CORPORATIONS AT HIS RANCH, I SUPPOSE HE FORMS FARM FIRMS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals L