



Red Bull-Renault driver and reigning world champion Sebastian Vettel of celebrates on the podium after winning Formula One's Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Vettel reigns supreme

AFP, Melbourne



World champion Sebastian Vettel sounded a warning to his rivals with a dominating victory in his flying Red Bull in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on Sunday. The German whizz, who at 23 became the youngest world champion last year, led his rivals a merry dance around the Albert Park street circuit, beating McLaren's 2008 world champion Lewis Hamilton by more than 22 seconds with Russian Vitaly Petrov third in a Lotus Renault.

It was Vettel's 11th win in his 63rd GP and continues from where he left off when he won the final race of last season in Abu Dhabi.

Vettel, who posted the fastest-ever lap at Albert Park to qualify on the pole, yet again did not resort to using the power-boosting KERS (kinetic energy recovery system) to further accentuate his gap on the F1 field.

"I think it makes it clear that they have a fantastic car as they have had for the last year and a half, they've had the fastest car since midway through 2009 and they continue to have the fastest car," Hamilton admitted.

Vettel tempered expectations that world constructors' champions Red Bull will again rule the 2011 season as they did last year.

"I don't like the word 'dominant' at this stage, to be honest," Vettel said.

"It's a long way to go. We have to keep our feet to the floor. It was a very good race today, obviously we got a lot of points which are very important as well as enjoying ourselves, but it's a long year and a lot of things can happen," Vettel said. "This is a special track and we have to stay focused for the next race." Vettel's emphatic performance ended his personal frustrations in Australia, where he had failed to finish twice along with an indistinguished 13th in 2009 in his three previous drives.

"It was important for us to finish the race because we didn't last year, so big compliments to everyone back in the factory," he said.

"The car was quick from the first moment but it was very reliable, which is the key and I finished at the Australian Grand Prix, so I am very happy." Vettel's Red Bull was by far the quickest car this weekend and registered a record lap around Albert Park of 1:23.529 to take pole position in Saturday's qualifying.

Ferrari's Fernando Alonso missed out on the podium in fourth place, while Vettel's Australian team-mate Mark Webber finished fifth for the third time in his home GP.

Hamilton, who won in Australia in his 2008 world championship season, praised the sheer speed of the Red Bulls, but sounded a warning of his own.

"It's rare to see in Formula One such

a big leap in performance and I feel privileged to have finished second," he said. "We're back in the fight and we're only a few points behind the guy who has a much faster car." "But we'll close that gap, I have no doubts about that and we clearly showed today after our first stint that we can compete with them in the race if we can get up front in the race and apply some pressure." There was jubilation in the Lotus Renault garage with Petrov's first podium finish in 20 GPs. "I am very happy to be on the podium with these guys and all week was pretty good for us and during practice and qualifying our car looked pretty strong and today the team did everything perfectly," Petrov said.

Vettel safely negotiated his way off the pole and headed off Hamilton and Webber to the notorious first right-hander, which claimed seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher, who was forced to pit before eventually retiring after 19 laps.

The German made his first pit stop to change the faster-wearing Pirelli tyres on the 15th lap and again on lap 36, while team-mate Webber made three stops.

Vettel comfortably held Hamilton at bay as he cruised to the chequered flag underlining Red Bull's dominance in the early stages of the new Formula One season.

The next stop on the F1 circuit is Sepang in Malaysia on April 10.

Police win Independence Day kabaddi

Sports Reporter
Bangladesh Police won the Independence Day Kabaddi Tournament after a hard-fought 25-24 victory over Bangladesh Army at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh Police bagged a 'lona' as they went on to beat Army.

The tournament was organised by the Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation (BKF) in financial assistance with Ministry for Liberation War Affairs. BKF president and Inspector general of Police Hasan Mahmud Khandaker distributed prizes among the winners.

A nation of openers

FROM PAGE 16
Sangakkara, after the quarterfinal, gave a fine combination of luck, pragmatic thinking and proximity in his country's tradition to forge partnerships.

"We are lucky in that sense. There are great cricketers in Sri Lanka. We are very proud of that legacy and the heritage. We don't think too far ahead. Partnerships are important in batting, bowling and fielding," said Sangakkara, himself part of the elite pairing with Mahela Jayawardene, the pair of them adding 4,251 runs in ODI cricket.

"Other factor is that we are very small as a country. Everyone lives in and around Colombo, play their cricket around Colombo where they come from. We see each other everyday and

play on the weekends. That makes it easy for us to bond," opined Sangakkara.

Sri Lanka's all-time best batting pair in one-day cricket is the Marvan Atapattu-Jayasuriya pair at the top of the order between 1996 and 2007, adding 5,462 with a highest of 237 runs. They have a staggering fourteen 100-run partnerships while Saturday's stars, Dilshan and Tharanga have already added 2,154 with seven century stands.

Dilshan was outstanding, cramping the England captain with the new ball (1-25) and then hitting a century. Sangakkara thought that it was Dilshan's best day in the tournament.

"He has a fantastic ability with whatever he does. He bowled very well to left-handers, makes new ball

turn. Andrew Strauss doesn't do too well against spin so our first option was to throw the ball to Dilshan.

"In the field, he was at his best in this tournament. He showed responsibility from start to finish with the bat and was magnificent," added Sangakkara.

It was a clinical win if there ever was one but in it too, there was a certain sense of class as the pair didn't give the England bowling a whiff.

"You need special performances to win big games. Today Dilshan and Tharanga gave us that little spark of inspiration. They were magnificent and ruthless. They were cramping up, they could have thrown it away but it shows how hungry they were and finish it off," said Sangakkara.

Mashrafe

FROM PAGE 17
the middle order, which looked too fragile during the World Cup.

Kapali has been in good form in the National League this season and scored a match-saving 153 against Dhaka recently.

Shuvagato, who hails from Mymensingh, has also been in good form in the National League slamming 125 for Dhaka against Chittagong in the last round. His medium-pacers have also proved effective as he took four wickets in the same game.

Meanwhile, all three Mashrafe, Kapali and Shuvagato Hom were in the preliminary squad for the World Cup.

Australia will arrive on April 3 to play three one-day internationals in Mipur on 9, 11 & 13 April.

Cricket lover's paradise

FROM PAGE 16
One is in danger of suffering finger cramps from taking all the pictures of the massive number of items but it is as simple as taking a look, being surprised (a paper cutting of a Test match in Don Bradman's era), being proud (an autographed bat of the Bangladesh cricket team) or simply stunned (a Colin Cowdrey bat from 1966 or an old clock from Bowral in New South Wales).

According to supervisor Channa, the owners mostly buy these items in auctions. A lot of the players have donated to the club as well, he informed. "Many players come to this restaurant. Recently Ricky Ponting and Mike Hussey came. Ponting had the item named after him," said Channa. The item named after the under-fire Australia captain is the Punter's Pepper Chicken.

The menu entrees of course bring out the light humour of the place. You can start with the Murali's Mulligatawny or Imran's Pakistani Pumpkin Soup with Gavaskar's Greek Salad or Ponsford's Prawns.

Mahela's Matriciana, Nasser's

Napolitana and Cairns Carbonara are some of the pastas but if you're in a hurry, the Dickie Bird Burger, de Silva's Colombo Burger or Donald's Deluxe Burger could soothe your appetite.

Allan Lamb's Stir Fry ("Sorry Allan, the lamb is Australian!"), Miller's Mixed Grill, Ganguly's Grill and Pollard's Paella are some of their more delicious platters.

A lot of current and former cricketers visit the café while touring Sri Lanka. "Except the Pakistan team, everyone came during the World Cup. Previously we had Kapil Dev, Harbhajan Singh and Darren Gough also coming here," said the supervisor, who also divulged that Sri Lanka great Aravinda de Silva is the most regular visitor.

When leaving the restaurant, even grown-ups consider staying back for another five minutes, just in case something was missed. They become little kids who don't want to leave Disneyland in the evening.

The Cricket Club Café might not have everything, but for a cricket aficionado, it is nothing less than a paradise.

England, Germany cruise

AFP, Paris



England and Germany took a big step towards Euro 2012 qualification on Saturday with routine wins over Wales and Kazakhstan respectively to take command of their groups.

After reigning world and European champions Spain, France, Holland and Italy had shown their continental rivals the way with victories on Friday - hard earned in the case of Spain as they came from behind to edge out the Czech Republic - the Three Lions and Die Mannschaft did not disappoint.

Fabio Capello's England put their match with minnows Wales to bed within 15 minutes of the kickoff as Frank Lampard netted from the spot and Darren Bent doubled the advantage to secure a comfortable 2-0 victory at the Millennium Stadium and give the visitors command of Group G on goal difference from Montenegro.

"We played really well, we passed the ball quickly and created chances to score goals with no chances for Wales," said a delighted Capello.

"The goals that we scored were really nice and in every moment we were focused on the game which was important.

On the downside, a booking for Wayne Rooney means the striker will miss the next qualifier, against Switzerland at Wembley in June.

"It's not good news for us," Capello said, aware the job is not yet done.

Germany were no less dominant in seeing off hapless Kazakhstan as they made it five wins from five games to push their advantage over Belgium and Austria to a massive eight

Navy win Independence Day b'ball

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Navy clinched the Independence Day Basketball Tournament title with a 73-53 win over BKSP at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

The winners dominated the first half with a 44-27 lead. Mithun and Rashed scored 29 and 23 points for Navy while Soaib and Akash scored 21 and 13 points for BKSP.

Bangladesh Basketball Federation (BBF) president Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin enjoyed the game and distributed prizes among the winners. BBF general secretary AK Sarkar was also present at the event.

Handball referees course

Sports Reporter

A four-day Handball Referees Course got underway yesterday at the Bangladesh Handball Federation office situated at Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Some 50 participants are taking part in the course which was inaugurated by National Sports Council director (Sports) Haiul Quaium.



Germany starlet Thomas Mueller wiggles past the challenges of Kazakhstan players during their 4-0 qualifying win at Kaiserslautern on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

BOA awards CWG & Asiad winners

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) gave away cash prizes to the athletes who won in the 19th Commonwealth Games and the 16th Asian Games yesterday.

BOA sent mega contingents to both Commonwealth and Asian Games held in October and November respectively. Bangladesh won the first-ever gold medal in Asian Games in Guangzhou when the men's cricket team clinched the Twenty20 Cup, but no remarkable outcomes in the Delhi Commonwealth Games.

Gold medal-winning cricketers were

awarded with Taka One lakh each, while the Women's team, who won silver, was awarded Taka 50,000 each.

Bangladesh's lone medal in Commonwealth Games came in the 10m air rifles team event when Asif Ali Khan and Abdullah Hel Baki won bronze medal and they were awarded Taka 3 lakh.

BOA secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed handed over the awards to the winners while Bangladesh Handball Federation president Nurul Fazle Bulbul, BOA member Jobaidur Rahman Rana and BCB chief executive officer Manjur Ahmed were among others present.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

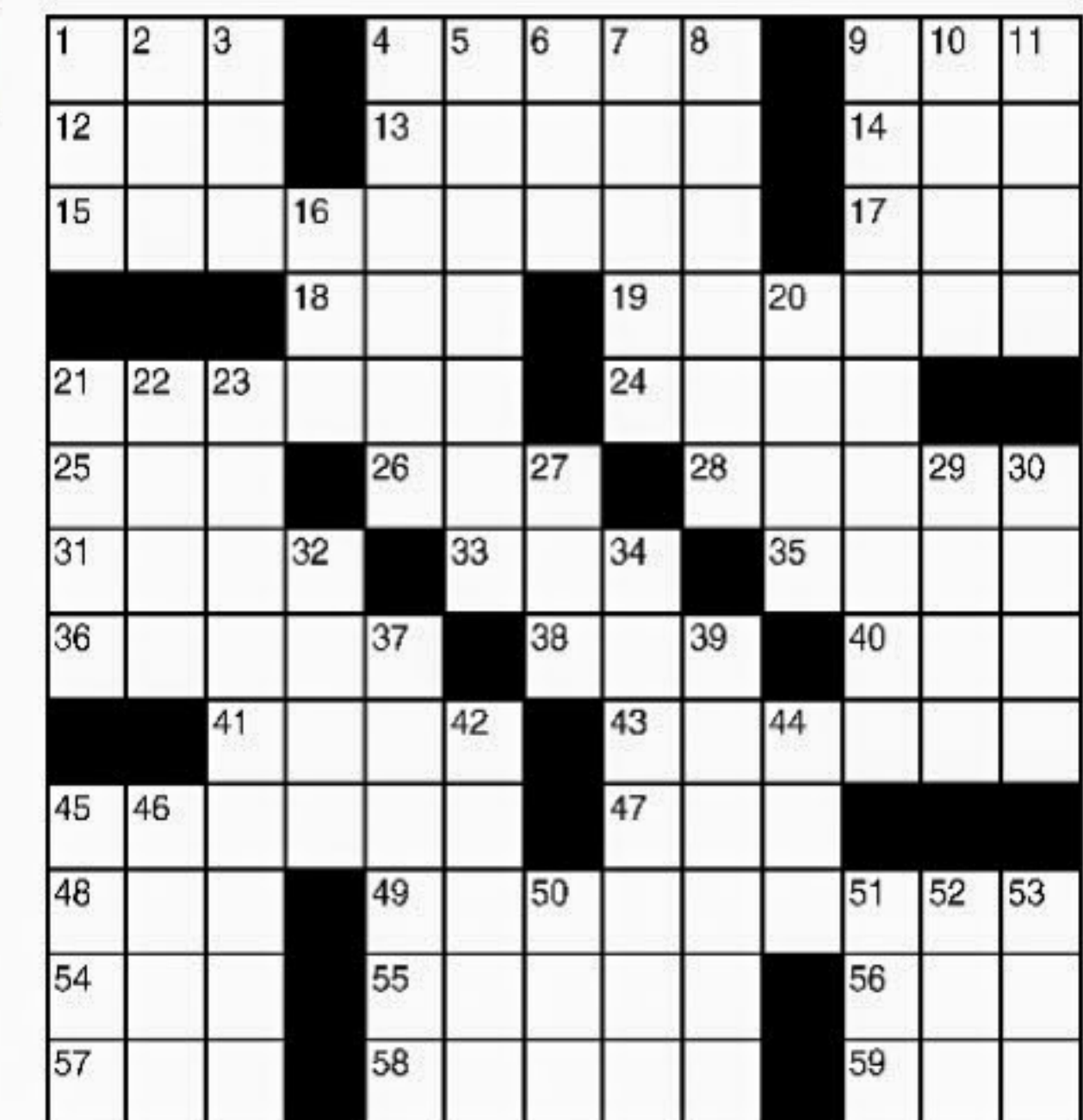
ACROSS
1 Plead
4 Agriculturists' venues
9 Corn on the —
12 Rage
13 The Little Mermaid
14 "The — Daba Honey-moon"
15 Maryland metropolis
17 Steal from
18 Bobby of hockey fame
19 Wheeled stretcher
21 Royal home
24 Needle case
25 Swiss cation
26 Fashion monogram
28 Homes for bees
31 Scottish
33 Scottish cap
35 —, "Nanette"

DOWN
1 Clothes protector
2 Historic period
3 Hair goop
4 Without bias
5 Recliner part
6 — de Janeiro
7 Come together
8 Detective
9 Meat-eater
10 Reed instrument and
11 Infant

36 Non-believer
38 Dallas basketballer, for short
40 Edge
41 Pc. of wordplay
43 Ebb
45 Go against
47 Judge Lance
48 Cow's comment
49 Navy rank
54 Blunder
55 Sun-dried brick
56 Fresh
57 Born
58 McEntire and others

59 Adam's mate
60 Destroy
21 Turning point
22 Vicinity
23 Asian city-state
27 Felon's flight
29 Oklahoma city
30 Not all
32 Soap actress Linda
34 Xylophone's cousin
37 Dale Earnhardt's org.
39 Kills bills
42 Crystal-lined rock
44 Massachusetts cape
45 Portent
46 Skin opening
50 Crowd
51 Individual
52 Gun the engine
53 Ram's partner

Solution time: 24 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

G R O Q Q O A B H D K Z F O D Y
R D O F I U O Y O U O Q P G Q N Y B F D Z I
K O N B K P B L O L B Q A I G I K O A
G I " H O U L Z L H O U L O L . "

Saturday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A BUSY ORTHOPEDIST HAS TO CORRECT MANY ARM BONE PROBLEMS, I RECKON IT'S ULNA DAY'S WORK.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals I