

First-class only at 15

CRICINFO

Wicketkeeper Barney Gibson became the youngest person to play first-class cricket in England after he made his Yorkshire debut aged 15 years and 27 days against Durham University to break a 144-year-old record.

Gibson, who only turned 15 on March 31, was given his chance after Jonathan Bairstow and Gerard Brophy, the two first-choice glovemen, were rested following a busy start to the domestic season. His first over behind the stumps in professional cricket was sent down by England pacesman Ajmal Shahzad and he didn't have to wait long for his first catch which came off Oliver Hannon-Dalby.

When he took the field it was already clear he'd set a new Yorkshire record which previously belonged to Paul Jarvis but during the day it emerged Gibson had surpassed Charles Young, who played for Hampshire aged 15 years and 131 days in 1867. Gibson had to get permission off his school to play in the match, but admitted he didn't mind skipping class.

"They have to give me permission to play -- but it was probably a good day to avoid," he told the Bradford Telegraph and Argus. "I was supposed to have triple science, double Maths and RE. They have sent me up here with some homework to do though."

Martyn Moxon, the Yorkshire coach, said that despite his age Gibson, who also represented the Under-14 side, fully justified his position. "We like to give our young players a chance but they have to be good enough and Barney's proved he is good enough at this moment in time," Moxon told Sky Sports News.

"His first catch today was outstanding and would have been a good catch for a keeper of any age. He'll not have kept to that kind of pace very much, but he's not fazed by the occasion or the publicity he's now getting. For someone so young he's very level-headed he knows what he needs to do."

Big partnership

FROM PAGE 16

Opener Dominic Hendricks was the top scorer with a 127-ball 85 that featured five boundaries.

The second match will be held at the same venue tomorrow while the third and final one-day and two T20 matches will be held at Mirpur.

BRIEF SCORES

SOUTH AFRICA ACADEMY: 213-8 in 50 overs (Dominic 85, Cody 30, Lefa 33, Hardus 31, extras 15; Babu 4-33, Sanjamul 3-42).

GP-BCB ACADEMY: 216-6 in 46.4 overs (Myshukur 14, Asif 76 not out, Soumya 81, Babu 21 not out, extras 14; Hardus 3-30, Dane 2-34).

Result: GP-BCB National Cricket Academy won by four wickets.



PHOTO: CRICINFO
Leicestershire paceman Matthew Hoggard (R) is ecstatic after taking another wicket on way to his four for 78 against Derbyshire on the second day of their County Championship Division Two clash at Grace Road yesterday. Derbyshire were bowled out for 305. In reply, the Leics reached 137 without loss after 47 overs.

Rankings irk Afridi

PTI, Karachi

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's limited-overs captain Shahid Afridi said on Thursday that he is not satisfied with the one-day rankings system, presently applied by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

His unhappiness stems from the recent announcement by the ICC that even if Pakistan, which lead the five-match ODI series 2-0 against the West Indies, manage to whitewash the series, it will not earn them a single rating point and they will still be placed at its current ranked sixth position.

"I can't understand this system. There should be some advantage for the visiting sides as winning a series is never easy for them no matter who they're playing against," Afridi told "The Express Tribune" newspaper from Bridgetown.

Afridi questioned the system that offers little reward against lower-ranked opponents. Even a 4-1 or 3-2 win against the ninth-placed West Indies means a drop in points for Pakistan since they are expected to beat the hosts.

"It's really difficult to prosper under the current ranking system. I have little clue what it is based on," Afridi said.

Afridi is not the first captain to criticise the ICC Ranking System, which also drew criticism from former Sri Lanka captain Kumara Sangakkara who termed it as "unfair".

Afridi, however, said that despite the disappointment over the ratings system, his team remained focused on winning the series against the West Indies.

"We'll give our best to seal the series, which is our main focus. It will boost the morale of the young team."

He also expressed his satisfaction over the performance of the youngsters on the tour.

"I'm happy with the performance of the young players and they are stepping up to the challenge," said Afridi.

Afridi said he is hoping for a better show from left-arm fast-bowler Junaid Khan, who made his international debut in the ongoing tour and has played two ODIs and a Twenty20 but is yet to take a wicket.

"It's not appropriate to expect a youngster to become a star overnight. He needs time and hopefully he would improve in the remaining matches."

Haider backs PCB drive

AFP, Islamabad

Runaway wicketkeeper Zulqarnain Haider Thursday backed Pakistan's fight against corruption after bookmakers confessed to making the death threats which prompted him to spend months in self-exile.

Haider hoped steps taken by the International Cricket Council (ICC), Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Pakistan's government would curb match and spot-fixing, and said he supported the efforts even if it damaged his career.

"I am satisfied that the ongoing fight against corruption in cricket will bear positive results," Haider, 25, told AFP by telephone. "I put my career on line and still don't bother if it continues to suffer."

Haider returned to Pakistan Monday, after fleeing an international one-day series in United Arab Emirates last November because of death threats, and seeking political asylum in Britain.

On Wednesday, Pakistan police said bookmakers among eight arrested in the city of Sialkot had admitted threatening Haider.

The wicketkeeper, who is still awaiting

security clearance to return to his home city of Lahore, said the arrests have given him more confidence.

"The kind of confidence given to me by the government has brought me back and I am happy that they are taking serious steps," said Haider.

"The image of Pakistan cricket has been badly hurt by match-fixing and this continues to haunt it after every few months, but now I hope that with the serious steps and actions a time will come when our cricket becomes clean."

Pakistan cricket has been rocked by fixing controversies since 1995 when Australian players Shane Warne, Tim May and Mark Waugh alleged then captain Salim Malik offered them bribes to underperform during a tour to Pakistan.

Last year Pakistan's tour of England was marred by a sensational spot-fixing scandal, ending in lengthy bans for three of their key players -- Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer.

"Pakistan cricket needs to get respect which it will get," said Haider. The wicketkeeper, who earlier announced his retirement from international cricket, said he would soon clarify his position with the PCB.

Ishant destroys Kochi

INTERNET, Kochi



Ishant Sharma went on a rampage with the new ball as Deccan Chargers crushed Kochi Tuskers Kerala by 55 runs in the Indian Premier League on Wednesday.

Sharma, opening the bowling alongside South African spearhead Dale Steyn, tore Kochi apart with five wickets in his first two overs as the hosts collapsed to 6-11 chasing 130 for victory.

Incredibly, opener Mahela Jayawardene was the only batsman in Kochi's top six to get off the mark, with Brendon McCullum, Parthiv Patel, Raiphi Gomez, Brad Hodge and Kedar Jadhav all departing for ducks.

Ravindra Jadeja (23 from 35 balls), Thisara Perera (22 from 23) and Vinay Kumar (18 from 19) added a measure of respectability to Kochi's total as the required run-rate ballooned out to more than 10 an over.

But when Jadeja fell to Amit Mishra the end was nigh and Steyn duly ripped through the tail, dismissing the shell-shocked hosts for 74 with 21 balls to spare and finishing with figures of 3-16.

Sharma picked up 5-12 from three overs -- the third-best return in IPL history -- and earned man-of-the-match honours ahead of Chargers captain Kumar Sangakkara.

The wicketkeeper-batsman and former Sri Lanka skipper struck 10 boundaries on his way to 65 from 47 balls, top-scoring as Deccan posted 7-129 from their 20 overs.

The visitors started poorly -- though, in hindsight, not nearly as poorly as some -- losing openers Sunny Sohal (one) and Shikhar Dhawan (four) early to left-armers RP Singh.

Vinay picked up the wicket of Bharat Chipli (four) in the sixth over as the Chargers stalled at 3-20, only to be revived by a 90-run partnership between Sangakkara and Australian Cameron White.

White played a tempered hand alongside his skipper, content to pick off the singles on his way to 31 from 34 balls as Deccan's innings gathered pace.

But their momentum was snuffed out in Vinay's final over, the seamer dismissing White and Sangakkara in successive deliveries to leave Deccan teetering at 5-110 with 18 balls remaining.

Australian Dan Christian (nine) and Dwaraka Ravi Teja (eight not out) got starts but struggled to reach the fence in the final overs, their progress stunted by some terrific bowling by Perera at the death.

What seemed a comfortable chase had become mission impossible within the first four overs of Kochi's reply, as the hosts collectively lost their heads and their wickets.

Steyn kick-started the rout by dismissing McCullum for nought off the fourth ball, and Sharma had Patel caught behind and bowled Gomez and Hodge in his first over to reduce the Tuskers to 2-4.

Jayawardene picked up his only runs by flaying Steyn to the boundary in the third over, though his stay was short-lived as he and Jadhav fell to Sharma before the innings was 25 balls old.

Perera flashed a couple of streak boundaries off Steyn in his short stay but never really looked comfortable on the Kochi strip, eventually mistiming a pull off Perera straight to White at cover.

Vinay joined Jadeja at the crease with the scoreboard displaying an unflattering 7-47, and the pair eked 26 runs from the next 30 balls before the latter holed out to midwicket.

That brought Steyn back into the attack for his fourth and final over, and the intimidating quick needed only three balls to skittle Vinay and Singh (0) and wrap up a comprehensive victory.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DECCAN CHARGERS: 129-7 in 20 overs (Sangakkara 65, White 31; Kumar 3-25, RP Singh 2-21)

KOCHI TUSKERS KERALA: 74 all out in 16.3 overs (Jadeja 23; ISharma 5-12, Steyn 3-16)

Result: Deccan Chargers won by 55 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Ishant Sharma.

BFF bans

FROM PAGE 16

information with language that cannot be described as decent," said Kazi Salahuddin when contacted yesterday.

"He [Chanchal] has a precedence too of writing inflammatory stories with headlines that have no connection to the story."

"The issue [of declaring him persona non grata] was raised by a member during today's (Thursday) executive committee meeting and the decision was unanimously made by all members that he should be banned," said Salahuddin.

The BFF president also stated that they had sent a number of rejoinders to the newspaper following the publication of false information, but none of their rejoinders had been printed.

When contacted, Chanchal denied the allegations saying that the BFF had only sent two rejoinders, both of which had been printed by his newspaper.

Duncan gets

FROM PAGE 16

been a lot easier for Amarnath to understand and interact with the players.

"There is a perception and a wrong one that an Indian [coach] can be influenced and that he will get involved in politics. You are presuming that he cannot be a strong person."

Low on TV viewing

CRICINFO



The 2011 Indian Premier League (IPL) continues to struggle to attract viewers compared to last season, with ratings down 21.99 per cent on average for the first 26 games across six key markets. The drop was even steeper over the last ten games, with ratings falling by 27.08 per cent. The likely culprits are cricket fatigue and a lack of familiarity with the teams, say media experts.

The average Television Viewer Rating (TVR), a time-weighted figure which accounts for time spent watching by viewers and the number of viewers, was 4.46 across the cities of Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad, down from 5.72 in 2010, according to TAM Sports, a division of TAM Media Research, the leading television ratings agency in India. The ratings are the lowest for the first 26 games since the tournament began in 2008.

For the 10 games beginning with Pune Warriors beating the Delhi Daredevils on April 17, and ending with Delhi scoring 231 in their crunching defeat of Kings XI Punjab on April 23, the average rating per game was just 4.20.

Sridhar Ramanujam, who heads brand consulting firm Brand-Comm, says India's sensational World Cup triumph is finally taking its toll. Ramanujam said he had recommended the IPL to his clients as a safer bet than the World Cup because television viewership for international cricket "is directly rated to India's performance and non-performance." India, however, went on a dream run to lift the World Cup.

"[It had] everything you could hope for as a die-hard Indian cricket fan," Ramanujam told ESPNcricinfo. "Beating Australia in the quarter-finals. Beating Pakistan in the

semifinal. Everything was at an all-time high. So after the World Cup, what?"

Ramanujam also believes the lack of outstanding games so far in the tournament has contributed to the decline in ratings, saying that aside from a few memorable performances from Paul Valthaty and Lasith Malinga, none of the games have caught his imagination.

Mumbai Indians, who currently sit atop the points table, continue to be the strongest draw for fans, partly because of the Sachin Tendulkar factor and partly their winning streak. Mumbai's game against defending champions Chennai Super Kings in Mumbai posted a 6.70 TVR, the third-highest rating so far, with 16.9 million turning in to watch Rohit Sharma and Harbhajan Singh deliver victory to the home side on Good Friday. But even the Mumbai Indians' ratings have suffered in comparison to last season, falling from an average TVR of 6.74 (over six games) to 5.29 (over five games).

For Hiren Pandit, Managing Partner-Entertainment, Sports and Partnerships at Group M, a prominent media buying agency, the continued popularity of Mumbai Indians suggests that the ratings are more likely a product of the confusion caused by players changing teams rather than cricket fatigue.

"My take is the teams have changed. Now because teams have changed, I think people are still figuring out who plays for whom. You are so used to a Yuvraj [Singh] playing for Kings XI but now he plays for Pune. So that is where the problem lies."

Pandit expects ratings to pick up again as fans come to grips with all the changes but Ramanujam thinks the ratings will continue to suffer until the semi-finals, saying, "basically, it is overkill and too much of a good thing."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

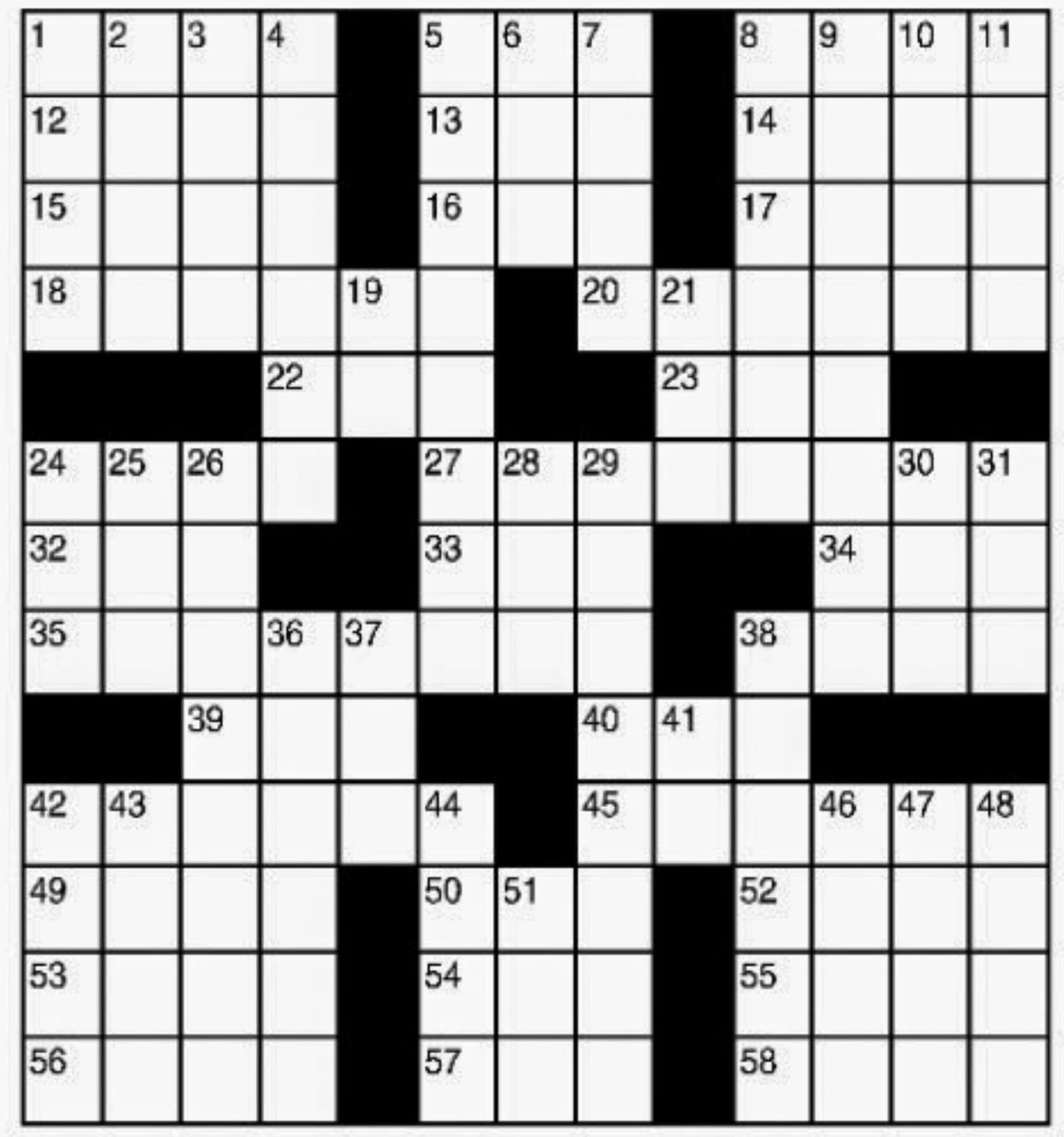
ACROSS
1 Frisbee, e.g.
5 Dance syllable
8 Somewhere out there
12 Busy with
13 "Town"
14 Acronym
15 Cicatrix
16 Ran into
17 "Yeah, right!"
18 Victorian vehicle
20 America's Cup entries
22 — out a living
23 18-Across, e.g.
24 Cardholder's woe
27 Drought-stricken region
32 In olden times
33 Category
34 Court

DOWN
1 Plate
2 Erstwhile Peruvian
25 "I" strain?
26 Impress partner
28 Einstein's birthplace
29 Framework
30 Travail
31 Bagel topper
36 Cut off
37 Wildebeest
38 Dossier
41 Type measure
42 Animal stomach
43 Scandinavian city
44 Prepare to travel
46 "The Music Man" locale
47 Dance lesson
48 Criticism
51 Advisory

35 Gridiron event
38 Bend
39 Actor Chaney
40 Writer Buscaglia
42 Confine
45 Sign up
49 Invitation abbr.
50 Sternward
52 Lavish affection (on)
53 Sheltered
54 Bill and —
55 Rams' mates
56 Information
57 Barbie's companion
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24 Slight touch
25 "I" strain?
26 Impress partner
28 Einstein's birthplace
29 Framework
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Solution time: 25 mins.

A M I S S P A S E T H
B A T H E R G P Y R E
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CRYPTOQUIP

J F C X K C Y K P C E C L G C J R
A C E D R G X A R E D Y Y X Q G E P L C E N
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D F C N A Y T P H K R X H Y E R .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SUPPOSING A BATHROOM IS BEING USED BY A MANY-ARMED SEA CREATURE, MIGHT YOU SAY IT'S OCTO-PIED?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals P

Arsene disagrees with Jose

AFP, London



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insists Jose Mourinho is wrong to claim that Barcelona have been the beneficiaries of biased decisions from referees.

Mourinho launched a furious blast at the Spanish champions and football's governing bodies after his Real Madrid side had defender Pepe sent off in a stormy Champions League semifinal first leg defeat against Barca on Wednesday.

The Real coach alleged that Barca had yet to win a 'clean' Champions League and claimed it was impossible for his team to beat their rivals because football's authorities want Pep Guardiola's team to play in the Wembley final.

Wenger had his own reason to feel aggrieved when Arsenal's Robin van Persie was harshly sent off against Barcelona as the Gunners crashed out

of the Champions League in the last 16. He was censured by UEFA for criticising the referee on that occasion, but he doesn't believe Mourinho is right to put Barca's success down to a global conspiracy.

"It is difficult for me to comment on that because we were involved in a situation like that," Wenger said on Thursday.

"I refuse to believe that (Mourinho's allegations). The day I believe that it is impossible to manage. This season they (Barcelona) had certainly some advantages but I feel they were accidental."

"You have to accept when a manager comes out of a big game like that with a disappointment you can go a bit too far."

"But I refuse to believe there is a script behind the stage and Barcelona is at an advantage.
"I feel they over-react certainly but they play the best football in the world and you have to give them credit for that."

While Wenger believes Barca's playing does them little credit, his love of the beautiful game ensures he can't ignore the many qualities of Guardiola's superlative team.

Lionel Messi is the jewel in Barcelona's crown as he proved yet again with both goals in the 2-0 win over Real. His second goal in the Bernabeu was so good that Wenger, asked to rate Messi alongside Pele, Diego Maradona and the rest of football's greats, admitted the Barca forward could be the best ever.

"Yes he could be for me. I have not seen all the players but he has great qualities; humility, desire to play, happiness to help the team. You never see any bad reaction despite all the kicks he gets," Wenger said.

"When you look at the numbers you have to kneel down and say fantastic. The guy scores 50 goals in a season in modern football and has 25 assists."

"When you see how difficult it is to score a goal you just have to say it is absolutely exceptional."