

Owen's dream debut

 **Football**
AFP, London

Owen Hargreaves made a dream debut for Manchester City as the injury-plagued midfielder scored the opening goal in his side's 2-0 victory over holders Birmingham in the League Cup third round on Wednesday.

Hargreaves was making his first appearance for City after being released by their bitter rivals Manchester United at the end of last season following a series of knee injuries over the last three years.

The 30-year-old, who had managed just six minutes of action since September 2008, took just 17 minutes to mark his return in style as he smashed a fine long-range strike past Birmingham goalkeeper Colin Doyle for his first goal since April 2008.

He eventually completed 57 minutes before departing to a standing ovation from the City fans after being

substituted to avoid provoking any muscle problems in his first prolonged outing for three years.

They were no match for City and Mario Balotelli increased the hosts' advantage with his first goal of the season, a powerful effort from inside the penalty area, in the 38th minute.

Hargreaves wasn't the only England international making his long-awaited return from injury on Wednesday.

At the Amex Stadium, Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard made a 15-minute substitute appearance in the closing stages of his side's 2-1 win at Championship club Brighton.

Gerrard was back in action for the first time since March after surgery on a recurring groin injury and his presence helped Liverpool finish off Gus Poyet's Brighton.

Craig Bellamy, in his second spell at Liverpool, opened the scoring in the

seventh minute as he ran onto Luis Suarez's pass and drilled a low shot into the far corner.

Dutch forward Dirk Kuyt got the decisive second goal in the 81st minute when he struck with a low shot via the far post.

Ashley Barnes notched a

RESULTS

Brighton 1 (Barnes 90-pen) **Liverpool 2** (Bellamy 7, Kuyt 81)

Cardiff 2 (Cowie 33, Gestede 82)

Leicester 2 (Howard 40, Dyer 66) aet, Cardiff won 7-6 on penalties

Chelsea 0 Fulham 0 aet, Chelsea won 4-3 on penalties

Man City 2 (Hargreaves 17, Balotelli 38) Birmingham 0

Southampton 2 (Hooiveld 27, Lallana 66) Preston 1 (Barton 52)

Everton 2 (Fellaini 89, P.Neville 103) West Brom 1 (Brunt 57-pen) aet

90th minute consolation for Brighton when he converted a penalty after Jamie Carragher's foul on Vicente.

Ten-man Chelsea won 4-3 on penalties against west London rivals Fulham after a 0-0 draw after extra time at Stamford Bridge.

Andre Villas-Boas's side had Brazilian defender Alex sent off early in the second half and saw Fulham's Pajtim Kasami miss the resulting penalty.

And the Blues rode their luck in the shoot-out as well as Frank Lampard missed their first kick before Fulham's Moussa Dembele and Bryan Ruiz failed from the spot to send Chelsea through.

Villas-Boas had made nine changes from the team beaten 3-1 by Manchester United at Old Trafford as the Portuguese coach gave full debuts to Romelu Lukaku, Oriol Romeu and Ryan Bertrand, with Josh McEachran and Paulo Ferreira making their first appearances of the season.

Everton needed extra-time to see off West Brom 2-1 at Goodison Park.

Chris Brunt's 57th minute penalty gave Albion the lead but Marouane Fellaini equalised in the 89th minute and Phil Neville got the winner in the 103rd minute.

Haddin hangs up T20I boots

AFP, Sydney

Australian wicketkeeper Brad Haddin called time on his international Twenty20 career on Thursday to focus on one-day and Test cricket.

Haddin played 25 times for Australia in Twenty20s -- the last time against Sri Lanka in Kandy during the early stages of the current tour.

He said a number of factors contributed to his decision.

"I thoroughly enjoy Twenty20 cricket and have taken great pride from playing all three forms of the game for Australia," he said.

"However, I feel the time is now right for me to concentrate on Test and one-day cricket.

"This decision has been made to prolong my effectiveness in these formats and provide me further time to prepare for the demands of one-day and Test cricket."

'Rule change unfair'

AFP, Berlin

Marathon world record-holder Paula Radcliffe admitted Thursday she will race the Berlin marathon on Sunday with some trepidation and said it was 'unfair' her record has been changed.

It will be Radcliffe's first marathon since she ran the New York race in 2009 and the 37-year-old admitted she is unimpressed by the news this week her previous best mark of two hours 15 minutes and 25 seconds no longer stands.

Radcliffe set the previous best in a mixed-race at the London marathon in 2003 after using male pace-setters.

Athletics governing body, the IAAF, have said only times achieved in all-women competitions will be acknowledged for world record purposes with performances in mixed conditions now being referred to only as "world best".

This means that Radcliffe's time of 2:17:42 from London in 2005 is now classed as the world record.

"I think it's a little unfair," she said.

"But rules are rules and I can't stress about things that are out of my control."

The mother of two will be up against local favourite Irina Mikitenko, who won the Berlin marathon in 2008 with a time of two hours 19:19 and Radcliffe admits she is nervous ahead of the race in the German capital.

Bangladesh A

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country, is expected to start from October 10 according to the domestic calendar.

It is likely that a weeklong camp will take place after two rounds of the NCL.

Nielsen's focus now on new talent

AFP, Sydney

Former Australian cricket coach Tim Nielsen signed with a regional development programme Thursday, fresh from his national resignation following a sweeping review of the sport.

Two days after quitting as Australian coach, Nielsen said he would head South Australian cricket's "Emerging Redbacks" scheme, aimed at developing the state's new cricket talent.

The top job was thrown open after the seven-month Argus Review of Australian cricket recommended the creation of an expanded head coach position, which Nielsen would have had to apply for, despite already being at the helm.

"Four weeks ago the review findings were handed down and I felt that made it quite difficult for me to continue in the role I was doing with Australian cricket," Nielsen told reporters Thursday.

"I'm not sure in my own mind I was willing to go through the process or put myself back in the mixer after four and a half years of doing the job."

He said he "coincidentally" learned of the South Australian role while digesting the Argus review, and talks with his family ultimately sealed his decision.

Second tier in limbo

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Besides, some clubs came forward to take part in the second tier league thinking that they would get financial assistance from the football governing body. This however has proved a futile exercise as the BFF has stated that they will not provide any financial assistance.

"We are confident to start the second tier league from November because we really want to see football on field as there is no competition before mid-December following the deferment of the fifth edition of Bangladesh League which is expected to start from mid-December," said Abdus Salam Mursheedy, chairman of the Bangladesh League Committee.

Mursheedy admitted that they need a lot of money to conduct the second tier league and he believed that the BFF president and himself would be able to manage sponsors to run the inaugural second-tier league.

League Committee manager Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that they have communicated with the clubs who let them know that they would send their confirmation by Friday. The clubs however, are also in dark about the rules and regulations and this led to a delay in them sending out confirmation letters.

An opportunity

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aspiring to be a part of the Bangladesh squad.

Thirdly and most importantly, it definitely would have allowed Mushfiq to earn respect from his teammates, if not made him an instant hit like Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni for his generous gesture towards England batsman Ian Bell in the second Test at Trent Bridge in July.

It is understood that these little things and finer details in the character of a cricketer comes through a well-thought system, which actually is not in place in our conventional setup where the idea of the game is limited to a set pattern.

But in a team that is often dogged by controversy, Mushfiq with all the credentials as an honest, sincere and perfect team man lost an opportunity to pass the first test of becoming a leader of men that Bangladesh desperately need to thrive as a unit.

"A week ago, I got to the stage where my wife actually turned up in Colombo unannounced and brought the three kids over for a chat because she realised we were doing it a bit tough," he said.

"When we had the opportunity to sit down face to face, it probably took a pretty clear turn to say that it's going to be difficult to get the role back."

The sweeping Argus Review was ordered by the Australian cricket board after the Test team's humiliating 3-1 Ashes series defeat at home to England this year.

Nielsen presided over two Ashes series losses against England, and Australia also failed to retain the limited-overs World Cup in April under his watch after winning it on the last three occasions.

Australian cricket is undergoing a transitional period following the retirement of greats like Shane Warne, Mathew Hayden, Glenn McGrath and Adam Gilchrist.

Nielsen, 43, said he "certainly didn't expect to be standing here" a month ago, but refused to make any further comment about stepping down from the national squad after four years, describing it as a "personal decision".

The hunt is now on for a new mentor, with ex-New Zealand coach Steve Rixon emerging as a frontrunner and former Australian Test batsman Justin Langer also in the running, at least as interim replacement while a tour of South Africa looms.

"We will sit in a meeting tomorrow (Friday) and let them know about our decision," Chittagong Mohammedan manager Abu Yousuf said. "One thing BFF will have to ensure to us is that Mohammedan will be eligible to play in the Bangladesh League if we emerge champions or runners-up in the second tier."

Yousuf said that the BFF has a tendency to promote a club to the professional football league from nowhere. For example, this year the BFF has permitted Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) to play the Bangladesh League though the football governing body is all set to start the second tier league.

Chittagong Abahani Limited president Alhaj Shamsul Haque Chowdhury echoing the sentiment of Yousuf said, "We are waiting for the rules and regulation of the second tier league and then we will respond but we are positive about taking part in the league."

"We are familiar with the rules and regulation as Beanibazar SC once played the Bangladesh League but one thing they told us that they would not provide the financial assistants but without their financial assistance it will be tough for clubs like us. Still we are positive about taking part in the league," said Khasrul Haq, president of Beanibazar.

Rahul seconds Sachin's motion

PTI, Mumbai

It might have been rejected by the ICC but Sachin Tendulkar's suggestion to revamp the ODIs by splitting the format into four innings of 25 overs each has got the backing of his Test teammate Rahul Dravid.

"It is interesting (suggestion). I don't know why the ICC has rejected it, but it's a good idea that Sachin has given and is worth experimenting," said India's batting mainstay of the England tour on the sidelines of a promotional event in Mumbai last night.

"It has been tried out in Australia (in domestic cricket) and the plus and minus points should be looked into," he added.

Tendulkar had written a letter to the ICC to change the format of the ODIs from two innings of 50 overs to four of 25 overs like a Test match but the world council's Chief Executive Haroon Lorgat rejected it.



Top seed Soma of Abahani plays a forehand return against Turbina of Dhaka in the Federation Cup Invitational Table Tennis Tournament at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Wins for Soma and Snigdha

SPORTS REPORTER

Top seeded Soma of Abahani and Snigdha of Dhaka won both of their respective matches in the Federation Cup Invitational Table Tennis Tournament at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday.

Soma defeated Turbina by straight 3-0 sets and then repeated the feat in the second game to beat Rahima of Biman in straight 3-0 sets in the women's single event.

Snigdha of Dhaka thrashed Cynthia 3-0 and then defeated Turbina 3-1 while Rahima recorded a 3-2 win over Rumi, who in turn beat Sinthia 3-1 in her second game.

In the boy's singles, Javed and Hridoy won both of their respective matches while Himel and Polish won one each of their two games.

School football C'ship deferred till December

SPORTS REPORTER

The National School Football Championship involving 4800 schools across the country will start from the third week of December.

Keeping the AFC U-19 Qualifiers in October and the final examination of the schools in mind, the BFF School Committee took the decision to defer the national school championship by two months to be started on December 22.

Initially, the championship was scheduled to start from mid October.

WEST INDIES IN ENGLAND

Short series begins today



CRICINFO, The Oval

The end of a long and successful season is drawing nigh for England, with India's cricketers having finally made it home, hotly pursued by Leicestershire and Somerset, county cricket's representatives at the Champions League. In barely a fortnight, the England team will also be in India, preparing for their return series of five ODIs, but right at this moment, they are down at The Oval, dodging autumnal showers and preparing for a pair of Twenty20 fixtures that serve only as a reminder of previous administrative folly.

The Allen Stanford Memorial Series (as these matches are not officially known) has come about as a result of the collapse of the Stanford Super Series after a single ill-conceived incarnation in November 2008. The ECB had sold the rights to four years' worth of such events, a quadrangular tournament at home and a "20/20 for 20" cash bonanza in Antigua, and then promptly spent all the broadcasting cash they had received from Sky. The upshot has been this fudged bid to fulfil their contractual obligations, an unsatisfactory compromise involving two skeleton international teams, one of which will be led by England's sixth captain of the calendar year, Graeme Swann.

Nevertheless there is, from England's point of view, an undoubted value to the exercise that is about to take place. In exactly 12 months' time the squad will be in Sri Lanka launching the defence of their World Twenty20 crown, with India once again lined up as their principal opponent in the group stages. Given how infrequently the format is played at international level, any opportunity to practise competitively between now and then has to be welcomed by the reigning champions.

England have a further fixture against India in Kolkata looming on October 29, and then probably no more than four bilateral matches scheduled home and away ahead of

the squad selection for the 2012 tournament. Therefore, this double-header could make or break the claims of more than just a handful of contenders, both those playing and those missing out.

Although the regular Twenty20 captain Stuart Broad is missing out through injury, the balance of England's squad is still geared towards the not-so-distant future. The telling decision not to hand the captaincy to the one-day leader, Alastair Cook, confirms the impression that England intend to make the best of a bad situation, and use these fixtures to gauge their Twenty20 development.

Alex Hales and Craig Kieswetter can be expected to open in both fixtures with a licence to clear the ropes, closely followed by a middle order that is likely to include three players - Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes - who have not yet celebrated their 22nd birthdays. Even in this new-look outfit, however, the decision to bring Surrey's Stuart Meaker into the squad as a net bowler provides a reminder that pressure for places is paramount.

Pataudi passes

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Pataudi had taken ill since his return from England this summer after presenting the Pataudi Trophy to Andrew Strauss at the end of the four-Test series.

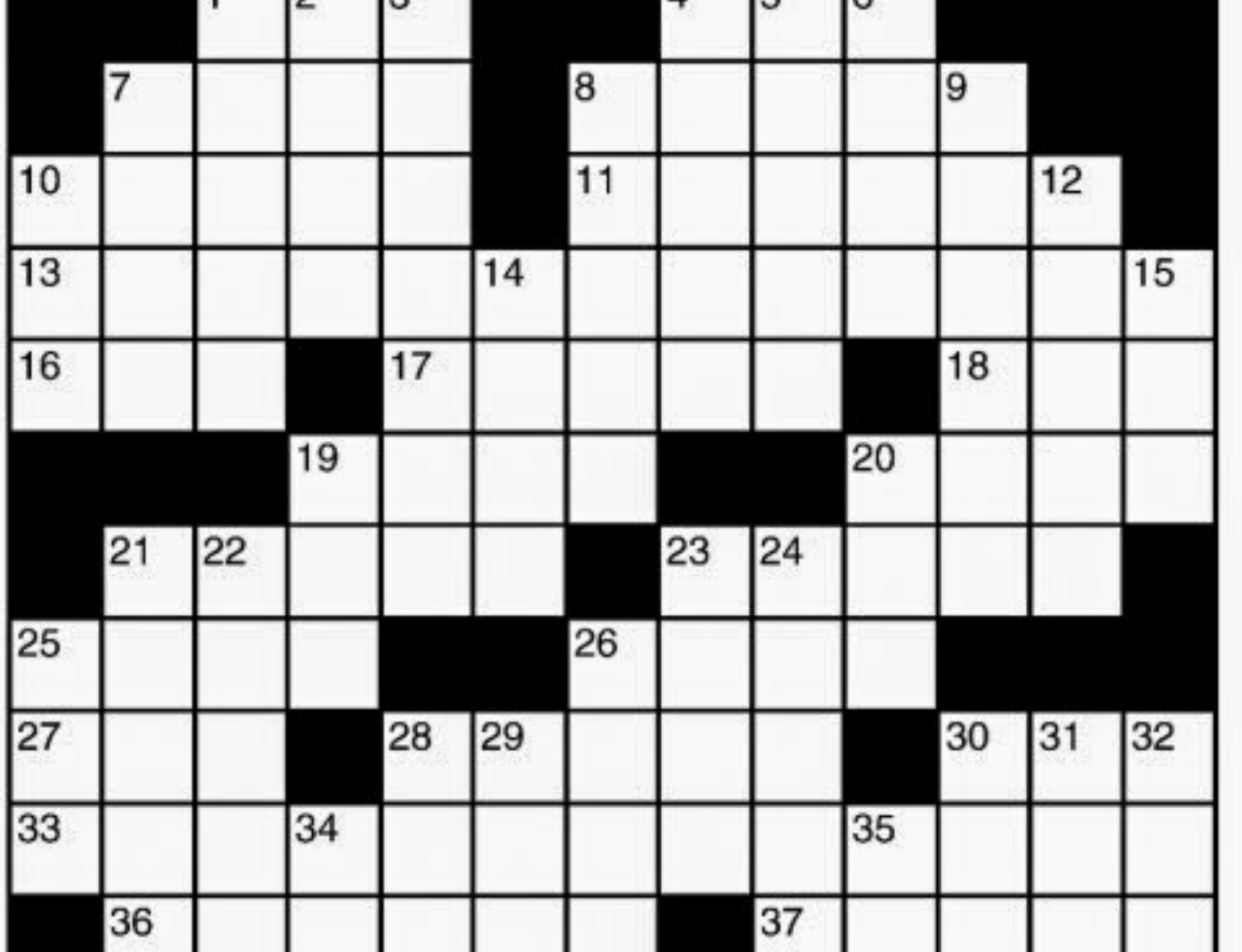
Pataudi was also a consultant to the BCCI from 2007 and part of the first IPL governing council but refused to continue in the role in October 2010, when the BCCI made significant changes to the league following the sacking of Lalit Modi as its chairman. As the spate of controversies increased, Pataudi was the only member of the governing council to admit the body's culpability, saying it "failed in its role to monitor the IPL's administration and be more questioning of decisions taken." He also took the BCCI to court in April this year, claiming the board had not abided by its contract with him while he was a consultant as well as a member of the IPL governing council.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	27 Really long time	2 Formerly	15 Potent stick
1 "Weird Al" Yankovic song composed solely of palindromes	28 Adjust	3 Nassau's island group	19 Group of whales
4 Airport org.	30 Tikkanen of hockey	4 Challenge of mockingly	20 Scarlet
7 Comical Carvey	33 Horrified	5 Irrational numbers	21 Meditate gloomily
8 Finnish bath	36 "Heavens!"	6 Heche or Hathaway	22 Window frame part
10 Nip	37 Crook's pseudonym	7 Rotary phone part	23 Scoff
11 Root vegetable	38 Near-quart	8 Hide	24 Rural area of Australia
13 Glimpse	39 Welshman or Scot	9 Pilot's route	25 Plead
16 Franken and Gore	40 Slight amount	10 Sch. group	26 Surgery tool
17 Necessities	41 Crucial	12 Aspirin targets	28 Heart line?
18 Victory	DOWN	14 Sudden rush of wind	29 Having a cupola
19 Long cut	1 Model Tyra		30 Poet Dickinson
20 Carry on			31 Lovers' quarrel
21 Explosion			32 Fool
23 Baby kangaroos			34 Walking pace
25 Fedora feature			35 Bee-keeper played by Peter Fonda
26 Praise to the skies			

Solution time: 21 mins.

SWIM	CPA	REAP
NASA	YAP	ESSE
IDLY	CREAM	PIE
PIE	HOLE	ROYAL
EVE	PAT	
LLAMA	HOLE	OUT
EON	PAX	BRA
OUT	WEST	PAINT
IVY	HAN	
LEONE	WEST	EGG
EGG	CREAM	LIAR
GALE	AGA	ERGO
ODES	TEN	REEK



CRYPTOQUIP

AISA IOYAUDOE NSLJXSEAJDOLF
Z M S L A Z D U K J E W Y U K K
Y N W M M Y . O F J W Y Y O A ' Y S L
U M X S E A U D R U M K X S E A U D R .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: SUPPOSING AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT BROKE A LAW WHILE BASKING ON A SHORE, WOULD HE GET IM-BEACHED?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: A equals T