

Trott slams the media

 Cricket

BBC ONLINE, London

England batsman Jonathan Trott has backed skipper Andrew Strauss to rediscover his form this summer.

Strauss's position has been questioned because he has only scored one century in his last 50 Test innings and averages just 28 over the past 17 months of Test cricket.

"The criticism comes with the territory," Trott told BBC Sport.

"We saw what happened with Alastair Cook. He had a bad run and went on to become Test batsman of the year."

Trott added: "I'm not saying Strauss is going to do that, but he might go on to score even more. Who knows what this game has in store for us.

"I think it would be a very boring place for the media if everyone was getting runs. They love turning on people.

"If all seven batsmen are scoring runs and all four or five bowlers are getting wickets, the columns wouldn't be very long.

"There's much more to write about when the team's not doing well or if someone's not doing well. When the team's not doing well there'll be three pages; when they're doing well there will be one column."

Strauss is now 35 years old, two years older than his fellow Ashes-winning prede-

cessor Michael Vaughan was when he left the role in 2008.

Nasser Hussain stepped down as England skipper at the same age, while another long-term skipper, Michael Atherton, left the captaincy aged 29 and retired as a batsman aged 33.

But Trott, who has been one of the stand-out successes of Strauss's time in charge, says the current captain has the full backing of his side.

Trott also admitted the four Test defeats this winter -- three by Pakistan and one by Sri Lanka -- had been difficult for a struggling batting line-up to cope with.

He said: "I think we might have been caught on the hop a little bit. The way we beat Pakistan 3-1 16 months earlier... the guys were really determined to do well, but we just didn't get the rub of the green.

"Over three Tests, if you've been thumped 3-0 you can't have played that great cricket, but in the second Test we were chasing 130, and bowled them out for 90-odd on a flat pitch in Dubai.

"We only have ourselves to blame. When we get four or five good days together, as we did in the second Test in Sri Lanka, you can see what a dominant side we can be.

"The bowling and the fielding were our usual high standards, but the batting this winter was the least impressive point."

\$20,000 fine on Gambhir

IANS, New Delhi

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Gautam Gambhir has been fined after the team maintained a slow-over rate during Monday night's Indian Premier League (IPL) match against Delhi Daredevils at the Ferozeshah Kotla.

At the end of the match, Knight Riders were assessed to be one over behind the required rate after allowances were taken into consideration.

Since it was his first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Gambhir was fined 20,000 dollars.

New ICC CEO may be named next week

CRICINFO, Dubai

The replacement for Haroon Lorgat, the outgoing International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive, is likely to be finalised next week. David Collier (ECB CEO), Dave Richardson (ICC's current general manager, cricket), Tarun Kunzru and an Australian name whose identity could not be ascertained, underwent an elaborate interview process in Mumbai on Sunday, in front of the ICC nomination committee, headed by Sharad Pawar, the governing body's president.

Also attending the meeting were the ICC vice-president Alan Issac, WICB president Julian Hunte, Cricket Scotland head Keith Oliver along with the pair of N Srinivasan and Giles Clarke (BCCI president and ECB chairman respectively). The four candidates had been shortlisted by the global executive search company Egon Zehnder.

Pawar said the nomination committee will deliberate further before making call. "We will discuss again before taking a final decision," Pawar told ESPNcricinfo. It is understood the panel, after internal discussions, will recommend the final name via teleconference to the ICC board comprising ten Full Members and three Associates. The name would then go for endorsement to the full council at the ICC's annual general meeting, scheduled for late June in Kuala Lumpur.

Sarker denies

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The minister also said that he doesn't even know who will head the National Sports Council in 2014 and they are just taking works forward regarding the world cup.

He also said that the opening ceremony of the Twenty20 World Cup might be held at the BNS and that the venue of Bogra has not excluded due to any political reason, rather it is still under consideration.

Replying to a query, Sarker also said that they were seriously thinking of the inclusion of the former national cricketers to the BCB executive committee as the government wants to utilise the experience of former cricketers.

Khulna

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going on May 15 but the stadium also needs approval from the ICC [International Cricket Council] if we are to host a Test," he added.

The Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra has also hosted a Test in 2006, the same year in which Khulna hosted two ODIs and a Twenty20 international. The Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium was one of the five purpose-built cricket grounds established in the run-up to the 2004 Under-19 World Cup.

It was granted one-day international status in January 2006, though the ICC will also grant Test status ahead of the series if the BCB are to apply.



Rajasthan Royals batsman Shane Watson pulls one during his unbeaten 90 against Pune Warriors in their IPL match at the Sahara Stadium in Pune yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Watto wallops Pune

PTI, New Delhi



Australian all-rounder Shane Watson hit a blistering unbeaten 90 as Rajasthan Royals thrashed Pune Warriors by seven wickets in a thoroughly one-sided Indian Premier League contest to keep their hopes of qualifying for the knock-out stage alive.

The loss was Pune's eighth in 12 matches and thus ended any theoretical chance whatsoever of making it to the knock-out stages. Royals now have 12 points and the convincing win have got them upto fourth place with a healthy net run rate of +0.265.

It was the same old story of batting failure for Ganguly and his men. The only change in the script being that Warriors skipper Sourav Ganguly opted to bat first but his team could muster only 125 for six which was certainly not enough to compete.

In reply, Watson sent the Pune bowlers on a leather hunt as his knock came off only 51 balls laced with 10 fours and four sixes. He added 56 runs with Ashok Menaria (18) for the third wicket and Royals won with 22 balls to spare.

Watson feasted on the freebies provided by Warriors' 36-year-old long time India discard Murali Kartik as he was hit for three fours and two sixes. The Aussie all-rounder signed off with a boundary.

Opting to bat first, Pune Warriors' batting woes continued as they could manage only 125 for six in their stipulated 20 overs.

Almost all the Warriors batsmen found the going tough as Team Rajasthan bowlers kept a tight leash on the home team batsmen.

Barring IPL debutant Anustup Majumdar who scored a quickfire 30, all the other batsmen found it hard to accelerate the pace of scoring on a pitch where stroke-making seemed difficult. Even Pune's best batsman Steve Smith struggled managing only 18 off 22 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PUNE WARRIORS: 125 for 6 (Majumdar 30, Smith 18 not out; Tait 3-13)

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 126 for 3 (Watson 90 not out, Menaria 18)

Result: Rajasthan Royals won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Shane Watson.

Easy win for Punjab

PTI, Hyderabad



Kings XI Punjab rode on a smashing half-century by Mandeep Singh and a superlative performance by their bowlers to notch up a comfortable 25-run victory over Deccan Chargers in a lop-sided Indian Premier League match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

Invited to bat, Mandeep cracked a strokeful 75 off 48 balls to help Punjab post a challenging 170 for five in their stipulated 20 overs.

The visitors then returned to restrict the Chargers to 145 for eight to keep their hopes alive of reaching the play-off stage by reaching the fifth position in the IPL points table.

Chasing 171 to win, opener Daniel Harris (30) gave Deccan some hope initially but they failed to build partnerships and kept losing wickets in regular intervals.

For Punjab, Praveen Kumar, Parvinder Awana and David Hussey took two wickets each to emerge as the peak of the bowlers. They were supported well by Azhar Mahmood (0/31) and Piyush Chawla (1/33).

The chargers had a tottering start as they

lost inform opener Shikhar Dhawan (8) and first down Parthiv Patel (17) cheaply to slip to 31 for two in the first five overs.

In the seventh over, Harris picked up a six off the first ball by Chawla and Cameron White played an inside-out shot in the last delivery to end the over with a boundary.

In the next over, Harris picked up a four off Ramesh Powar at the square leg area before whacking one at the mid-wicket area for another boundary.

Punjab then tightened things up with seamers Awana and Mahmood giving away just four and two runs in the next two over respectively.

However, it was skipper David Hussey who broke Deccan's backbone, striking twice in four balls in his only over to dismiss the two set batsmen Harris and White and reduce Deccan to 71 for four.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KINGS XI PUNJAB: 170 for 5 (Mandeep 75, Marsh 22, Miller 28*; Reddy 2-39)

DECCAN CHARGERS: 145 for 8 (Harris 30, Patel 17, Reddy 24, Jhunjhunwala 19; P Kumar 2-15, Hussey 2-2)

Result: Kings XI Punjab won by 25 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Mandeep Singh.

Victoria, Maria move on

 Tennis

AFP, Madrid

The two leading women both reached the third round of the Madrid Masters on Tuesday, with top seed Victoria Azarenka made to struggle by Czech Andrea Hlavackova before emerging 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) winner.

The Belarus player was serving for a quick straight-set result but was broken as her opponent pulled level at 5-5 in the second set.

The seed had to save a set point in the 12th game to bring on a tiebreaker, which finally saw her through with 32 winners in one and three-quarter hours.

"The surface is a bit slippery, but it's the same for all of us," she said of the blue clay court surface.

"I don't like to complain - it is what it is and it won't change now."

Second seed Maria Sharapova defeated another Czech in Klara Zakopalova 6-4, 6-3, firing 18 winners and breaking five times.

The Russian, whose match was started before 11:00 am (0900 GMT) due to the demands of television, said that a few days of training on the controversial blue clay surface last week paid dividends.

"It's not so much about the colour. It does look good on television. But it plays a bit different. It's about the amount of clay on the court and the way it bounces," she said.

"You have to get used to it but I came here after winning Stuttgart and got in four or five days on it. I got settled in so it's just a matter of adjusting. It's also the same for everyone."

On the men's side, vet-

eran Czech Radek Stepanek ended the run of Australian Bernard Tomic in the first round, with the Queensland youngster exiting 6-2, 7-5.

The 31st ranked Tomic, who reached a career-best first clay quarter-final last weekend in Munich, lost in less than 90 minutes.

French ninth seed Gilles Simon fought back over Italy's Fabio Fognini 6-7 (1/7), 6-3, 6-3 while Ukrainian 16th seed Alexandr Dolgoplov opened with a defeat of Spain's Pablo Andujar 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

Compatriot Gael Monfils,

Number 15 Fernando Verdasco advanced against Denis Istomin 7-5, 6-2.

Croatia's Marin Cilic beat Spain's Albert Montanes 6-3, 6-3 while Federico Delbonis of Argentina stopped another local as he put out Spain's Albert Ramos 6-3, 6-2.

Italian Andreas Seppi put out Frenchman Michael Llodra 7-5, 6-4. Estoril semi-finalist Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland beat Belgian Olivier Rochus 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) but had plenty to say about the courts.

"It's not a problem of colour, I don't care what



Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova pumps her fist after winning a point against Czech Klara Zakopalova in the second round of Madrid Masters yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

seeded 12th and playing his first match for a month and a half after an abdominal muscle injury, put out German Philipp Kohlschreiber 7-5, 6-7 (2/7), 6-3.

colour they are. But these courts are really terrible. You are skidding a lot and it's tough to control the ball.

"It's a joke to have such courts at big event like this."

Shakib home

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but still the KKR has dominated the table, leading the table on 17 points.

"It is a matter of team combination. The team management will do what is best for the team," said Shakib, who had played a sufficient quantity of cricket over the last two-three seasons, when asked about his absence from most of the matches this season.

In the three matches he played, he was man-of-the-match in one. He has done well as a bowler but he said that he was now focusing on his batting.

Bollywood hero Shahrukh Khan's KKR has been one of the most popular sides and Shakib has already expressed his optimism that this year they have a good chance of winning their maiden IPL title.

Samuels to join team in England

 Cricket

IANS, Hove

Batsman Marlon Samuels was expected to finally link up with the West Indies touring party Tuesday.

The Jamaican was one of three players yet to join the squad which arrived here last Wednesday, with batsmen Narsingh Deonarine and Assad Fudadin still stuck in Jamaica waiting for UK visas.

CMC Sports understands, however, that Samuels will join his teammates in Northampton where the West Indies are due to play their second tour match, a four-day fixture against England Lions starting Thursday.

The West Indies are due to leave for Northampton Tuesday morning.

Samuels has been campaigning in the Indian Premier League over the last month but the team management had appeared unsure at the weekend over his actual arrival date.

His absence, and that of the two Guyanese left-handers, meant the West Indies faced Sussex in the opening three-day match with just 11 available players.

Fast bowler Fidel Edwards sat out the game injured. The Windies were able to get just 34 overs out of the game as rain wrecked the encounter at the Probiz County Ground.

Only 16 overs were possible on Monday's last day as rain ended play before lunch with the West Indies on 90 for three in their first innings.