

Wenger wary over Bale hype

AFP, London

Comparing Tottenham Hotspur winger Gareth Bale to the world's best players is way over the top, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger believes. Even though the 23-year-old has made huge strides since Wenger first watched him as a teenager at Southampton, the Frenchman says talk of Bale in the same breath as Barcelona's Lionel Messi and Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo is premature.

Bale enhanced his reputation with two superb free-kicks as Tottenham beat Lyon 2-1 in the Europa League at White Hart Lane on Thursday and the Wales international has now scored seven goals in his last five matches for club and country. But Wenger, who signed Theo Walcott as a 16-year-old from Southampton in 2005 when he might have opted for Bale, said he still had a lot to prove at the highest level.

"Bale has the potential to develop and become the players that you compare him to," he said. "However, Messi has won two or three Champions League, a few championships, scored 95 goals in a year, so let's not go too quick. You are always very quick here, but let's slow down a little bit." And Wenger insisted he had no qualms over the decisions he'd made regarding the then academy duo at south coast club Southampton.

Rohan leads

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Omar Faruk captured three wickets for Chittagong while Mehedi Hasan scored highest 42 runs for Khulna in the second innings. Earlier Chittagong could manage a 234-run overall lead as they were bundled out for 138 runs after resuming the day on 71 for three.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHITTAGONG: First innings 271 and Second innings 138 all out in 58.4 overs (Rohan 43, Tanzid 34, Prosenjit 23, extras 12; Mustafizur 3-23, Mehedi 2-35, Noman 3-36)

KHULNA: First innings 175 all out and Second innings 197 all out in 49.3 overs (Sahjalal 24, Adnan 37, Mehedi 42, Noman 20, extras 11; Faruk 3-31, Rohan 4-38).

Result: Chittagong Division won by 37 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Ashfaq Ahmed Rohan

Feni down

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now more motivated to avoid relegation but I don't know whether I will continue as I have been given charge temporarily."

Arambagh KS manager Kazi Jolly said that Feni Soccer were fortunate to win the match as it was a fumble from his defender that allowed Feni to take the lead.

"Despite losing the match against Feni Soccer, I believe we are on the right track for avoiding relegation, but we need a bit of luck for that," said Jolly.

Bowlers

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out I will still come after you," he said.

"Gazi got me out two or three times last time I was here but I have manipulated bigger spinners so this is just another situation. So like I said if a bowler can get me out then he is just doing his job, so there is nothing to keep getting this question about Gazi Gazi Gazi," he added.

Pistorius denies murder charge

Athletics

THE GUARDIAN

Paralympian Oscar Pistorius has denied murdering his girlfriend in the "strongest terms" and offered his "deepest sympathies" to her family.

As the South African athlete appeared in court on Friday to face a murder charge, his family and management company issued a statement that said: "Firstly, and most importantly, all our thoughts today must be with the family and friends of Reeva Steenkamp."

"Oscar Pistorius has appeared in court here in Pretoria this morning formally charged with the murder of Reeva Steenkamp. The alleged murder is disputed in the strongest terms."

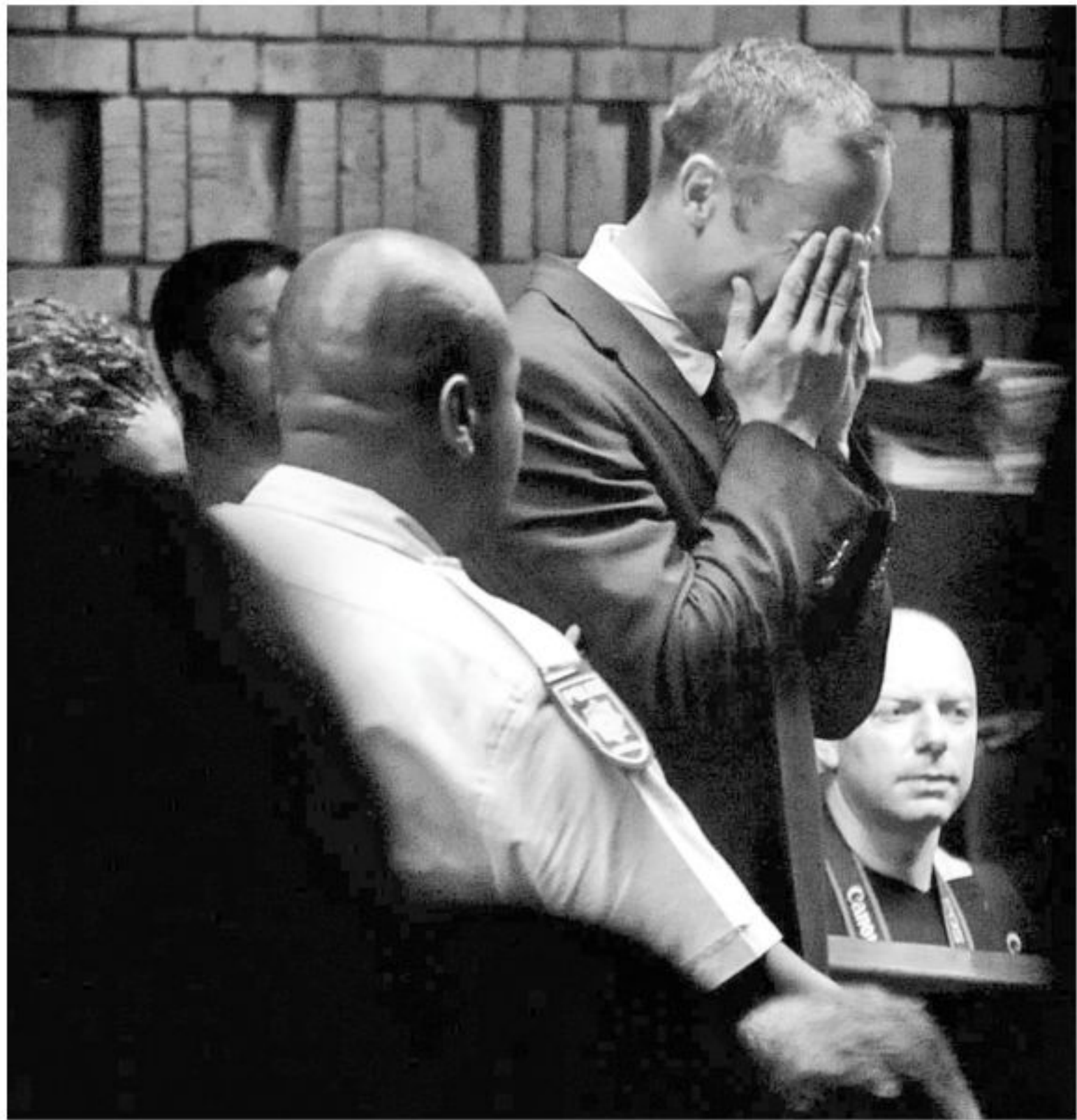
The statement added: "Oscar Pistorius has made history as an Olympic and Paralympic sportsman and has been an inspiration to others the world over."

"He has made it very clear that he would like to send his deepest sympathies to the family of Reeva."

"He would also like to express his thanks through us today for all the messages of support he has received – but as stated our thoughts and prayers today should be for Reeva and her family, regardless of the circumstances of this terrible, terrible tragedy."

Pistorius, 26, broke down and wept uncontrollably in court as prosecutors said they would pursue a charge of premeditated murder against him. He is accused of shooting dead Steenkamp, a model and reality TV show participant, at his home in the early hours of Thursday morning.

It has been claimed that Pistorius will plead he mistook her for a burglar, and a South Africa media report on Friday reported he shot four times through a



South Africa's double-amputee Olympian Oscar Pistorius (R) buries his face in his hands in the court room during his hearing on charge of murdering his model girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day on at the Magistrate Court in Pretoria on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

bathroom door. Police have not disclosed details and there has been no verification of the claim.

Pistorius, his hair short and neat, solemnly entered the packed courtroom wearing a grey suit and blue tie. He quickly broke down, putting his hands to his face, his trauma reflected in the faces of watching photographers.

"Take it easy," chief magistrate Desmond Nair told him. "Come take a seat."

As proceedings continued, Pistorius repeatedly lost his composure. When the magistrate used the phrase "premeditated murder" the athlete leaned forward as if trying to bend over double, his head bowed, sobbing and shaking.

Nair announced the case as "the state versus Mr Oscar Leonard Pistorius" involving a charge of one count of murder. The prosecution said the charge was premeditated murder, indicating the prosecution would file that more serious charge.

Nair presided over the hour-long hearing in a hot courtroom crammed with more than 100 people, including numerous local and international journalists. The magistrate ruled that no recordings of court proceedings would be allowed in the case.

Pistorius's father, Henke, was in court, as was his brother Carl, sister Aimee and other supporters of the double-amputee runner. At one point Henke leaned forward

and placed a comforting hand on Pistorius's back; at another, Carl put a hand on his shoulder.

Controversial South African businessman Kenny Kunene, wearing sunglasses, was also present, saying he had come to support his friend Pistorius. The hearing was relatively informal with court attendees wearing T-shirts and jeans, and journalists frequently tweeting from phones. Yet the man in the dock was evidently inconsolable.

The magistrate delayed Pistorius's bail hearing until Tuesday and ruled the 26-year-old would be held at a Pretoria police station until then, despite a likely perception of "preferential treatment", since it would be more common for the accused to be detained in prison.

Family members reached forward to touch Pistorius's shoulder as he stood and left the courtroom while cameras clicked and flashed.

The Paralympic champion had arrived at court earlier in the back of a police vehicle, hiding his face with a jacket and A4 notebook pressed to the window.

Forensic experts are expected to continue examining the house in the upmarket estate on the outskirts of Pretoria where Steenkamp, 29, was killed.

Pistorius made history in London last year when he became the first double-amputee track athlete to compete in the Olympic Games as well as the Paralympic Games.

The tragedy dominated South African TV, radio and newspapers, with the Times front page headline stating: "Oscar's darkest day".

Stuart Higgins, a former editor the Sun and now a PR consultant, has flown out to South Africa to help co-ordinate the Pistorius family's media strategy.

Kiwis routed in decider

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Alex Hales produced a batting masterclass as England dominated New Zealand with both bat and ball to race to a 10-wicket win in the T20 series decider in Wellington on Friday.

Stung by a heavy loss in the second match in Hamilton on Tuesday, England bounced back to restrict New Zealand to 139 for eight after sending the home team into bat, with Stuart Broad and Jade Dernbach bagging three wickets apiece.

Hales and fellow opener Michael Lumb then dismantled the New Zealand attack to overhaul the 140-run target in just 12.4 overs in front of a stunned Wellington crowd.

Hales scored 80 off 42 balls, including four sixes and nine fours, while Lumb notched 53 off 34 deliveries, sending the ball onto the roof of Westpac Stadium to bring up the winning runs with his fifth six of the night.

Opener Martin Guptill (59) top-scored for New Zealand but the Black Caps struggled for runs and their bowlers allowed England to score at will, giving them no chance of defending their modest total.

Despite admitting he was wrong to make the Black Caps bat first in Hamilton, Broad again elected to bowl after winning the toss, aware the chasing side has won all four previous T20 internationals at Westpac Stadium.

The gamble paid early dividends when he enticed Hamish Rutherford (11) into a pull shot with a short-pitched delivery in the fourth over which sailed to Dernbach in the field for an easy catch.

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum and Guptill steadied the innings. But they struggled for runs before McCullum tried to break the shackles and was caught on 26 attempting to cart James Tredwell over the boundary.

Incoming batsman Ross Taylor managed the first six of the innings in the next over off the bowling of Joe Root before being caught out.

New Zealand will now look to regroup before the first one-day international in Hamilton on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 139 for 8 in 20 overs (Guptill 59, McCullum 26, Elliott 15, Franklin 15; Broad 3-15, Dernbach 3-36)

ENGLAND: 143 for no loss in 12.4 overs (Lumb 53 not out, Hales 80 not out)

Result: England won by 10 wickets and clinched the series 2-1.

Player-of-the-match: Alex Hales.

Nadal easing back

Tennis

AFP, Sao Paulo

Spain's Rafael Nadal cruised to a two-set victory in his singles debut at the Brazil Open here late Thursday but then the 11-time grand slam winner blasted the ATP Tour for its choice of balls.

The former world number one needed only 78 minutes to prevail over Brazilian Joao Souza, ranked 140th in the world, 6-3, 6-4.

Nadal advanced to Friday's quarter-finals where he will face Argentine Carlos Berlocq, who beat eighth seed Albert Ramos 7-6 (9/7), 6-4.

"It was an important victory for me," Nadal said. "The conditions are very difficult. The court is very fast, the ball too. The problem is the ball which is very bad," he added.

The 26-year-old Spanish star said the Brazilian organizers of the event were not to blame.

"It's the fault of the ATP for allowing play with a (tennis) ball of poor quality. The ATP does not have the capacity or the infrastructure to be able to analyze the conditions before the tournament begins," he added.

He said he made a "good decision" by

withdrawing Wednesday from a scheduled doubles match he was to have played with Argentina's David Nalbandian against Argentine Horacio Zeballos and Austrian Oliver Marach.

Nadal said he was able to rest his knee, after a tough week of play in Chile last week, and made clear that his priority here was to play the singles event.

The \$455,775 Brazil Open is part of the Latin American clay court circuit, along with the Vina del Mar and the Mexico Open in Acapulco where Nadal plans to play later this month.

He said he did not feel any particular discomfort during the match.

"I was more or less OK, perfect no. I am in a process of recovery," he noted. "The important thing is to have regularity, to be able to compete. I am confident that with the days and weeks, I will regain what I am missing."

Nadal, who reached both the singles and doubles finals Sunday at his comeback event in Vina del Mar, Chile, is the top seed at this week's event here.

The world number five, who has claimed seven of his 11 Grand Slam titles on the clay courts of Roland Garros, won the Brazil Open in 2005 when it was held in Costa do Sauipe in eastern Bahia state.

The tournament was moved to Sao Paulo last year when Spaniard Nicolas Pietrangeli won.

Gayle-force takes Dhaka

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Chasing a target of 198, Sylhet did well, courtesy of some quick-fire knocks from Dwayne Smith (41) and Mushfiquir. Chasing under pressure in front of a packed stadium was never going to be easy and Sylhet initially struggled and slumped to 28 for two within the first four overs. However an 82-run partnership off 51 balls between Rahim and Smith revived the chase and took the Royals to 73 for 2 at the halfway stage.

Rahim who had initially taken the back seat, opened up with a string of lethal boundaries in the second half off the game. The highlight of his innings came in the 12th over when smacked Pollard for two

sixes and a four in consecutive deliveries. While Smith fell to Mosharraf Hossain in the 13th over, Mushfiquir continued his aggressive stroke-play, ensuring to hit a boundary every over. He scored six fours and five sixes in his 44 ball-86 but failed to put the final icing on the cake.

Earlier, having been signed up to play just one match in the competition this year, Dhaka's owners must have felt like they had struck gold with Chris Gayle's century. His 51-ball 114 was the tenth time he scored a century in T20 cricket.

This time though he didn't exactly go berserk right from the word go.

In fact at the end of the first twelve overs of the

match, Gayle had only scored 26 runs off 28 balls. Things however, changed drastically from the 14th over onwards when the newly-introduced Suhrawardi Shuvo was hit for three sixes and a boundary.

The next four overs saw eight sixes and a four off Gayle's bat. His acceleration was so remarkable that Gayle raced from 55 to 100 in just 10 balls. Gayle was dropped at short third-man on 99 but reached his century a ball later in that over.

Dhaka had got off to a slippery start as they lost half of their top order with just 64 on the board. Shakib Al Hasan with 38 was the second highest scorer.

Ajmal wrecks havoc

Cricket

AFP, Cape Town

Off-spinner Saeed Ajmal took all five wickets as Pakistan finished on top on the second day of the second Test against South Africa at Newlands on Friday.

South Africa were struggling at 139 for five at the close, still 199 runs behind Pakistan's first innings of 338.

Ajmal took five for 41.

Three of Ajmal's wickets came after the use of the decision review system, including a controversial dismissal of star South African batsman Jacques Kallis.

South African captain Graeme Smith and Hashim Amla were both out leg before wicket after being given not out by umpire Steve Davis.

Kallis was given out

caught at short leg and immediately called for a review, which showed that the ball had not touched his bat before looping off his pad to the fielder.

But he was then given out leg before on the advice of television umpire Billy Bowden, although replays showed the ball was only brushing the outside of his leg stump, in the area known as "umpire's call".

Kallis was clearly shocked and stood at the wicket seeking clarity before reluctantly returning to the pavilion.

It was not clear what the conversation between Davis and Bowden had been and on what basis Kallis was given out on what was a marginal call.

Controversy apart, it was a superb display of bowling by Ajmal, who bowled 25 overs unchanged into a stiff south-easterly wind,

varying his flight and mixing off-spin with cleverly disguised top spinners and "doosras" which turned away from the right-handed batsmen.

It was a productive day for Ajmal, who helped fellow tailender Tanvir Ahmed put on 64 for the ninth wicket to take Pakistan comfortably past the 300 mark. Their eventual total seemed unlikely when Vernon Philander took three wickets in his first three overs to reduce the tourists to 268 for eight.

Ajmal came on to bowl after 11 overs had been bowled in South Africa's innings and struck with his ninth delivery, Smith missed a sweep and Pakistan successfully sought a review.

Two overs later Ajmal had Alviro Petersen smartly caught at short leg by Azhar Ali, who dived to his right to

hold a sharp chance.

At tea, Ajmal had taken two for 20.

Amla went back on his stumps and was also given out on review before Kallis was dismissed.

He was followed by Faf du Plessis, caught at slip off a "doosra" for South Africa's highest score of 28.

AB de Villiers and Dean Elgar survived until the close.

Pakistan batted until lunch after resuming at 253 for five, although Philander's early strikes raised the home side's hopes of wrapping up the innings quickly.

Philander, who took five for 59, struck with his first ball of the day when Asad Shafiq was caught at first slip without adding to his overnight score of 111.

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN: First innings (overnight 253-5)

Hafeez c Smith b Steyn 17
Jamshed c De Villiers b Philander 3
Azhar c De Villiers b Morkel 4
Younis c De Villiers b Philander 111
Misbah c Elgar b Morkel 0
Shafiq c Smith b Philander 111
Sarfaraz c Petersen b Philander 13
Tanvir c Philander b Peterson 44
Gull lbw b Philander 0
Ajmal not out 21
Irfan b Peterson 6
Extras: (lb-5, nb-3) 8
Total: (All out in 116.2 overs) 338
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-21, 3-33, 4-33, 5-252, 6-259, 7-266, 8-268, 9-332.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	25	7	55	1
Philander	26	10	59	5
Morkel	20.3	6	59	2
Kallis	19.3	2	52	0
Peterson	23.2	0	94	2
Elgar	2	0	14	0

SOUTH AFRICA:

First innings
Smith lbw b Ajmal 19
Petersen c Azhar b Ajmal 17
Amla lbw b Ajmal 25
Du Plessis c Younis b Ajmal 28
Kallis lbw b Ajmal 2
De Villiers not out 24
Elgar not out 11
Extras: (b-2, lb-5, nb-6) 13
Total: (For 5 wickets in 60 overs) 139
To bat: Philander, Peterson, Steyn, Morkel.
Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-50, 3-84, 4-102, 5-109.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gul	11	3	32	0
Tanvir	9	4	17	0
Irfan	10	1	32	0



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal (R) celebrates after dismissing South Africa batsman Alviro Petersen (not in picture) during the 2nd Test in Cape Town at Newlands yesterday.