

SPORT

BCL to kick off from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The fifth version of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), a franchise-based four-team first class competition, will start from tomorrow.

Walton Central Zone will take on Islami Bank East Zone at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra while BCB North Zone will face off against Prime Bank South Zone at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in the opening day's fixtures.

From the recently returned New Zealand touring party, only left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who did not play any match on the long trip in New Zealand, and batsman Mosaddek Hossain have been drafted to the squads.

The league will miss the services of most of the national players as the Tigers have back-to-back international tours — they will visit India to play a one-off Test from February 9 and that will be followed by a full tour of Sri Lanka.

The BCL was originally scheduled to start in September last year but the franchises were apparently reluctant to play without the national cricketers and then it was scheduled to kick off from January 20 this year.

"I personally believe we cannot compro-

mise with the schedule, not even for a single domestic tournament because of the availability of the national players. It's high time that we come out of the age-old culture; instead we must follow the calendar," said national selector Habibul Bashar.

SQUADS

ISLAMI BANK EAST ZONE: Mehedi Maruf, Liton Das, Alok Kapali, Tasamul Haque, Yasir Ali, Zakir Hasan, Irfan Sukkur, Mohammad Saifuddin, Abul Hasan, Abu Jayed, Saqlain Sajib, Rahatul Ferdous, Ebadat Hossain, Saddamman Islam and Shahanur Rahman.

PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE: Abdur Razzak, Anamul Haque, Shahriar Nafees, Fazle Mahmud, Tuskar Imran, Mohammad Mithun, Al Amin Jr, Mosaddek Hossain, Zaur Rahman, Shohag Gazi, Al Amin Hossain, Nazmul Islam, Salman Hossain, Towhidul Islam and Moinul Islam.

WALTON CENTRAL ZONE: Shamsur Rahman, Saif Hasan, Rokibul Hasan, Marshal Ayub, Taibur Rahman, Shuvagata Hom, Tanbir Hayder, Mosharraf Hossain, Mohammad Sharif, Shahidul Islam, Abdul Majid, Shahadat Hossain, Mohammad Sharifullah, Zakir Ali and Dewan Sabbir.

BCB NORTH ZONE: Naeem Islam, Junaed Siddique, Jahurul Islam, Mahmudul Hasan, Sadman Islam, Nasir Hossain, Dhiman Ghosh, Ariful Haque, Farhad Hossain, Sanjamul Islam, Shafiqul Islam, Saddam Hossain, Yeasin Arafat, Farhad Reza, Suhrawardi Shuvo and Taijul Islam.

J-GREEN SAKAI LADY'S FESTIVAL U-16 girls off to winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-16 women's team yesterday got off to a winning start in Japan when they handed a 2-1 defeat to Sakai Academy in the lone practice match for the J-Green Sakai Lady's Festival, which is scheduled to get underway from tomorrow in Osaka.

Sirat Jahan Swapna, the striker whose brilliant performances saw her net five goals in the SAFF Women's Championship in India, put the girls in red and green ahead in the 24th minute before hosts Sakai Academy equalised six minutes later.

However, Bangladesh restored the lead and wrapped up the 70-minute match in spite of the chilly weather when Mishrat Jahan Mousumi struck in the 35th minute, according to a press release from Bangladesh Football Federation.

Before the start of the match, head coach Golam Rabbani Choton was apprehensive as the Thailand Under-16 team had lost to Sakai Academy 10-0 earlier in the day.

"The girls gave their utmost effort and won the match. We have learned a lot from the match," said Choton, whose charges will start their campaign with three matches on Saturday.

The Bangladesh U-16 women's team went to Japan to take part in the J-Green Sakai Festival as part of their preparation for September's AFC U-16 Women's Championship in Thailand.

Uttara thump Kalindi

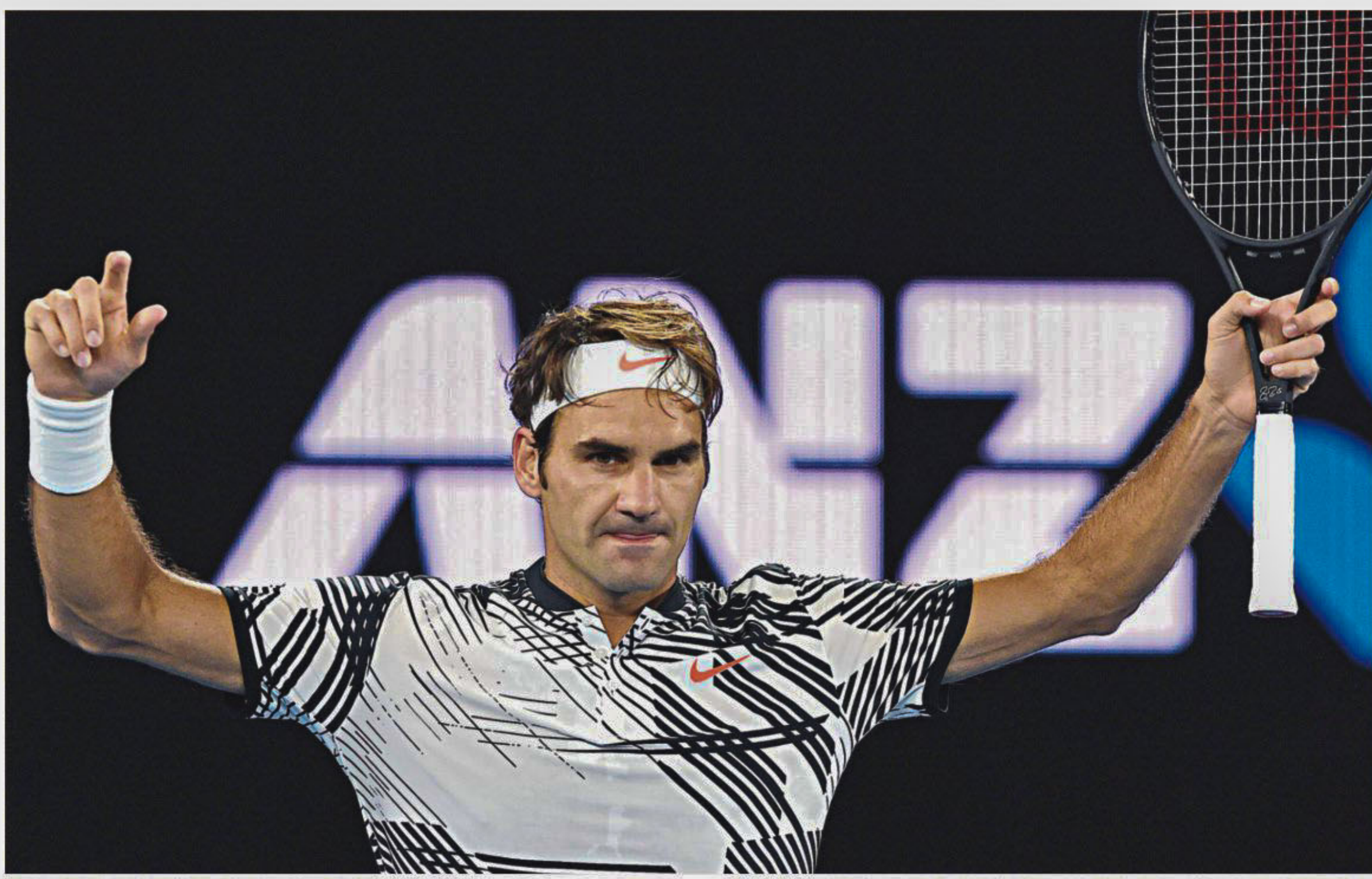
SPORTS REPORTER

Uttara Sporting Club outplayed Kalindi Kriya Chakra by 174 runs in the First Division Cricket League at the Jahangirnagar University ground yesterday.

Uttara posted 300 for eight thanks to Asiqul Islam's 90 and Mozahedul Islam's 82. In reply, Kalindi were all out for 126 runs.

At the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, Mohaimenul Islam slammed a hundred as Young Pegasus (242-8) beat Azad Sporting Club (234-7) by eight runs.

In the day's other matches, Surjo Torun Club (200 all out) beat Shinepukur Cricket Club (201-8) by two wickets at Fatullah Outer Stadium, City Club (194 all out) beat Orient Sporting Club (191 all out) by three runs at the BKSP and Rapid Foundation (248-6) beat Dhanmondi Progoti Sangho (183 all out) by 65 runs at BKSP.



In his first major tournament after returning from injury, Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer became the oldest player in 43 years to reach a Grand Slam final by outlasting compatriot Stan Wawrinka over five sets in the Australian Open semifinal in Melbourne yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Federer prevails in Swiss epic

AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer edged a five-set thriller against his fellow Swiss and close friend Stan Wawrinka at the Australian Open on Thursday to become the oldest Grand Slam finalist in 43 years.

The 17-time Australian Open champion saw off the world number four 7-5, 6-3, 1-6, 4-6, 6-3 in three hours and five minutes and will face either Rafael Nadal or Grigor Dimitrov in Sunday's final.

It will be 35-year-old Federer's sixth Australian final and 28th Grand Slam decider in total, and caps a marvellous comeback after the second half of last season was ruined by a knee injury.

The four-time Australian Open champion becomes the oldest man to reach a Grand Slam final since Australia's Ken Rosewall (39 years 310 days) at the 1974 US Open.

In an enthralling contest, Federer won the opening two sets before Wawrinka clawed back to take the semi-final into a fifth, only for Federer to prevail with a service break in the sixth game.

"Yes, it is real now. I can talk

about playing in finals for the first time," Federer said on court.

"I have been dodging that bullet for the last few days now talking about the next round and the next round but this is the last one.

"So I will leave it all out here in Australia and (even) if I cannot walk for another five months, I will give it all I have."

The two Swiss jockeyed in the

opening games with Federer having three break points in Wawrinka's second service game and Wawrinka getting two break points, but all were saved.

Wawrinka had another break point saved in the 11th game but he paid for a netted forehand in his next service game to drop the opening set in 50 minutes.

He netted a backhand on break

point in the sixth game of the second set and angrily smashed his racket in reaction, receiving a code violation warning from the chair umpire.

The match turned quickly for Wawrinka as Federer raced to a two sets lead after holding three set points.

Wawrinka left the court for a medical timeout and returned to the court with tape around his right knee, but hit back with two breaks to take the third set in just 26 minutes as Federer became loose, giving his friend the chance to play his way back into the contest.

Wawrinka broke again in the opening game of the fourth set with a beautiful backhand return winner, but Federer broke straight back.

Wawrinka earned three break points in the ninth game with some splendid groundstrokes and on his third break point he rifled a forehand cross-court winner to break, and then served out for a fifth set.

But Wawrinka cracked with a poor service game and a double-fault on double break point gave Federer a crucial 4-2 advantage.

Federer held his two remaining service games to win on the first of his three match points.

'Playing Rafa would be unreal'

REUTERS, Melbourne

Roger Federer made it as clear as he politely could that he would welcome the chance to renew his epic rivalry with Rafa Nadal, who plays Grigor Dimitrov in the second semifinal today, as he chases his 18th grand slam title.

"Rafa's given me the most problems in the game ... I'm probably Rafa's number one fan, I think his game is just tremendous. He's an incredible competitor.

"I'm happy that we've had some epic battles over the years

and of course it would be unreal to play him here."

While Federer's preference seemed clear, he did not earn his reputation as one of the great gentlemen of sport without paying due respect to both of his potential opponents.

"(Dimitrov)'s got a very complete game. He can mix it up really well. He's very confident and you never want to play confident players, but it's him or Rafa," said Federer, laughing.

"It's going to be tough either way."



The Tigresses began their preparations at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday ahead of next month's 2017 Women's World Cup Qualifier. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

England thrash India

AFP, Kanpur

Skipper Eoin Morgan's sublime half-century and a disciplined bowling effort powered England to a seven-wicket win against India in the first T20I in Kanpur on Thursday.

Chasing a modest 148 for victory, England rode on the third-wicket 83-run stand between Morgan (51) and Joe Root (46 not out) to romp home with 11 balls to spare.

But it was Moeen Ali's career best 2-21 that set up the opening win in the three match series as the visitors restricted the Virat Kohli-led side to 147 for 7.

In reply, Billings, who hit a 10-ball 22, showed his intent in the second over as the innings as he smashed paceman Jasprit Bumrah for 3 fours and a six to set the pace.

Billings shared a 42-run opening stand with Jason Roy (19) before leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal removed the openers.

But Morgan and Root kept the chase on track with their attacking brand of cricket.

Morgan, who recorded his eight T20 fifty, struck a four and 4 sixes during his knock.

Debutant Kashmiri off-spinner Parvez Rasool removed Morgan to claim his first T20 wicket but not after the left-handed batsman had taken the game away from the hosts.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 147 for 7 in 20 overs (Kohli 29, Raina 34, Dhoni 36 not out; Moeen 2-21)

ENGLAND: 148 for 3 in 18.1 overs (Roy 19, Billings 22, Root 46 not out, Morgan 51; Chahal 2-27)

Result: England won by 7 wickets. Player-of-the-match: Moeen Ali.

AB's absence may help us: Domingo

CRICBUZZ

South Africa coach Russell Domingo believes that the absence of AB de Villiers for the forthcoming Test tour of New Zealand, England and the home series against Bangladesh later this year could spur his team to reach greater heights in the longer formats of the game.

De Villiers has just recovered from a troublesome elbow which needed surgery and played his first match for South Africa - against Sri Lanka, in the third T20I on Wednesday, his first outing since June last year.

Domingo is now hopeful that the team can continue its upward curve in the absence of their star player.

"The worst thing about it is that he's not going to play for us. The best thing is that it gives everybody a bit of peace of mind."

"They know what's going on... there's clarity. There's nobody looking over their shoulder wondering if he's going to be the one to go because AB is going back. It gives us a bit of breathing space for the batters to really knuckle down, focus on their game and not be too concerned about when AB de Villiers is coming back," Domingo concluded.

Warner, Head punish Pakistan

AFP, Adelaide

Australia cruised to a 57-run victory over Pakistan in the fifth and final one-day international at the Adelaide Oval on Thursday.

After setting an imposing total of 369-7, thanks to a record opening partnership of 284 between David Warner and Travis Head, the Australians bowled Pakistan out for 312.

Pakistan's Babar Azam scored 100 and Sharjeel Khan a quickfire 79, but the home side were always in control and celebrated Australia Day in style with a convincing win.

Warner and Head earlier got Australia away to a superb start, with Warner particularly damaging as he smashed the Pakistan attack.

Warner blasted 179 and Head 128 on their way to an opening stand of 284, a new Australian record for any wicket in ODIs.

Both batsmen made their highest scores in ODIs, with Head also recording his maiden international century.

After losing the toss and being asked to bowl first, the Pakistanis almost got the perfect start when Mohammad Amir enticed an edge from Warner with his first ball.

But a diving Azhar Ali at first slip could not hold onto a difficult chance and Warner was soon in full flight.

He brought up his 50 from 34 balls and his 100 from 78 including 11 fours and two massive sixes. His 150 came from only 107 deliveries with 17 boundaries and three sixes.

Head was far more circumspect but once the ball stopped swinging after just four overs, he began to look more and more comfortable.

On a flat pitch that offered nothing

WHIRLWIND WARNER

248 David Warner and Travis Head combined to score 284, the second-highest first-wicket partnership in ODI history, two runs short of the world record posted by Sri Lanka's Sanath Jayasuriya and Upal Tharanga

5 Warner ties Tendulkar for the most 150+ scores in ODI history with

6 Warner this season equals the most ODI centuries by a batsman in any season with six. Kumar Sangakkara scored six hundreds in 23 innings in 2014-15

9 Warner has nine hundreds in Australia, the joint-highest by any opening batsmen in Australia equalling Adam Gilchrist. Gilchrist got there in 98 innings while

cramp, restricting his movements.

Warner eventually fell when he swatted a short ball from Junaid Khan to Babar at point with the score on 284.

Australia were headed for a score well over 400 when Warner and Head were in full flight but Pakistan fought back with some late wickets to restrict them to 369.

Pakistan's chase started badly when Azhar fell leg before to Mitchell Starc for 10, but Sharjeel and Babar moved the score to 140 before Sharjeel mistimed a pull shot and skied a catch.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 369 for 7 in 50 overs (Warner 179, Head 128; Junaid 2-61, Hasan 2-100)

PAKISTAN: 312 for 9 in 49.1 overs (Sharjeel 79, Babar 100, Akmal 46; Starc 4-42, Cummins 2-60)

Result: Australia won by 57 runs and clinched the five-match series 4-1.

Player-of-the-match: David Warner.

Player-of-the-series: David Warner.



David Warner (R), who scored 179, forged Australia's highest ever one-day partnership with fellow centurion Travis Head during the fifth and final ODI against Pakistan at the Adelaide Oval yesterday. PHOTO: AFP