

Our quarterly overview of UK Sports

SOCCER

Congratulations go to Manchester United in winning a third consecutive Premiership title together with the Carling (League) Cup. Congratulations also go to Chelsea on winning the FA Cup Final 2 - 1 despite their opponents, Everton, scoring the fastest goal, in 25 seconds, in FA Cup Final history.

Liverpool (runners-up in the Premiership), Chelsea (third) and Arsenal (fourth) will again enter the UEFA Champions League competition next season, although Arsenal face a qualifying tie before gaining entry to the main draw.

Commiserations go to West Bromwich Albion, Middlesbrough and Newcastle United who were all relegated from the Premiership to The Championship league next season. They will be replaced by Wolverhampton Wanderers, Birmingham City and Burnley.

Manchester United did suffer disappointment, however, in the UEFA Champions League final against Barcelona. The Catalans from Spain, who only qualified for the final with a last second winning goal at Chelsea in the semi-final, played great attacking football throughout the match, as they had throughout the tournament, and were worthy champions. Manchester United were defending the title they won the previous season and would have become the first team to successfully defend

the Champions League title in the history of the tournament. That accolade now awaits a future team.

As to the 2009/10 season, rumours already abound as to who will leave the major clubs in the summer and who will join. It is rumoured that Kaka, the Brazilian maestro at AC Milan, might join Chelsea from whom a record bid of over £73 million has been reported, but Real Madrid remain favourites to sign him should he leave the Italian club. Real Madrid are also rumoured to be continuing their pursuit of Ronaldo from Manchester United. Chelsea have already appointed Carlo Ancelotti from AC Milan as their new manager to replace Guus Hiddink who accepted an interim appointment and who now returns to manage the Russian national team in their quest for World Cup glory.

CRICKET

After a narrow series defeat in the West Indies over the winter, England more than gained revenge with a comprehensive 2 - 0 Test series win once we had got the lads from the Caribbean playing in colder and wetter conditions back in England. Our usual summer weather conditions, whilst often bemoaned about by the location population, usually give our cricket team a much needed advantage when touring teams from South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka tour in England! When our team are playing in short sleeved shirts, one will frequently see the touring side's players in the field in long sleeved sweaters!

The ICC World Twenty20 tournament has, at the time of writing, just started in England and the home team have just managed to lose their opening game to one of the underdogs, the Netherlands! Not a great start you might think, but then everybody who follows cricket in England is thinking (at least!) exactly the same thing. At least four excellent chances to run out the opposition batsmen were lost simply because the English fielders could not throw the ball straight at the wicket. Indeed, so disheartened had the England fielders become that one golden opportunity was lost because the fielder, rather than throwing the ball a short distance at the stumps, decided to run at the wicket with the ball in his hand. This might have been a way of ensuring that he did not miss the stumps with a throw but the only problem was that the opposition batter was a faster runner than the fielder and got 'home' before the fielder could break the wicket. The comedy of errors with the fielding even culminated with the same fielder gifting the Dutch team victory with another inaccurate throw at the wicket off the last ball of the match. Not only did he miss the target again but nobody was 'backing up' and the Dutch

were able to secure a second run which won them the match.

There remains much debate about the Twenty20 style of cricket, where only 20 overs are bowled by each team, and the more historic and classic form of the game as played in Test matches which last five days. The former is certainly popular with the crowds and with the financial controllers in the game. Over some three to four hours, spectators can see the start and finish of a match with much lusty hitting of the ball by the batters. The scoring of fours and sixes, and the dismissal of batters, are greeted with blasts of pop music and go-go dancers leaping on to small platforms to celebrate on behalf of the relevant supporters. This may well represent an accident waiting to happen but it all adds to the atmosphere of fun - at least until such an accident does happen!

To many supporters of the game of cricket, however, this fun game, whilst necessarily lucrative for the clubs and the associations that make up the game, remains anathema to the purists of heart. In Test cricket there are no restrictive rules to make run scoring quicker or to reduce the length of the run up of the fast bowlers. Over a five day match the tactical and strategic aspects of a Test match play a much greater part, both on the part of individual batters and bowlers and the setting of field positions. The strengths and weaknesses of every batter are scrutinised by the fielding teams and the style of bowling and associated field positions are carefully considered by team coaches and captains. Against any one particular batter facing a particular style of bowling a long leg fielder may be more dangerous to the batter than a short leg - such references not, of course, being attributed to the fielders' physics but to the, somewhat, unusual descriptions of fielding positions (of which this example is but one)!

Five day Test matches do represent the purist form of cricket and we all look forward eagerly to the Test series this summer against our old foes, the Australians, with whom we will be battling it out for those coveted 'Ashes'. The Australians have lost five of their key men since the last Ashes series in Australia which England lost, somewhat ingloriously, 5 - 0! Hayden and Langer their opening batters, Gilchrist their wicket keeper batter, and Warne and McGrath their bowlers have all gone. These five men were outstanding cricketers over many years and they will be very hard, and possibly in some cases impossible, to replace. But the Australians have a great system to bring through new talent and new faces such as Phillip Hughes, Marcus North, Shane Watson, Andrew McDonald, Brad Haddin, Nathan Hauritz, Ben Hilfenhaus and Graham Manou may yet prove their worth in the Test series.

England also have some relatively new players including Ravi Bopara who had a magnificent series against the West Indies and appears to have secured the number three batting position as his own, Tim Bresnan, Graeme Swann, Stuart Broad and Graham Onions (he knows his stuff!). Let's hope all the young players who might come to experience an Ashes Test match this summer enjoy the undoubted competitiveness and excitement of the occasion.

The five Ashes Tests will be played at Sophia Gardens, Cardiff (8-12 July), Lord's, St. John's Wood, London (16-20 July), Edgbaston, Birmingham (30 July-3 August), Headingley, Yorkshire (7-11 August) and The Oval, London (20-24 August).

Two Twenty20 matches will then be played at Old Trafford, Manchester on 30 August and 1 September.

Seven One Day 50 Over matches will then be played at The Oval (4 September), Lord's (6 September), The Rose Bowl (9 September), Lord's (12 September), Trent Bridge (15 and 17 September) and Riverside (20 September).

TENNIS

The European Clay Court season has now

culminated with Roger Federer winning the Men's Singles Title and Svetlana Kuznetsova the Ladies Singles Title at the French Open at Roland Garros. Federer has now joined a small elite group of players who have won every Grand Slam title, the French Open having eluded him until this year. He also equalled Pete Sampras's record of fourteen Grand Slam titles.

All eyes now turn to the grass courts of England and 'The Championships' at Wimbledon which takes place from 22 June to 5 July. Will further history be in the making? If Federer repeats his success at Roland Garros he will exceed the Sampras record with a fifteenth Grand Slam title. As usual, World Number One, Rafael Nadal, Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic will be out to stop that happening but, with the French title in the bag Federer is likely to come to Wimbledon with renewed confidence. Whether or not Andy Roddick or James Blake, the strongest contenders from America, can challenge the top four is probably questionable but since Nadal, Murray and Djokovic all fell before the semi-finals in Paris, who knows what might happen.

In the Ladies Singles the American

challenge is much stronger with the Williams sisters, who always challenge at Wimbledon, seeking further success on the grass courts on which they thrive. However, there is no one dominant lady at the present time and this title is too close to call, but good luck Venus and Serena.

UPCOMING SPORTING EVENTS

Golf – The Open Championship (Turnberry, Ayrshire, Scotland) – 16 to 19 July.

Women's British Open (Lytham St Annes, Lancashire) – 30 July to 2 August


Athletics – London Grand Prix (Crystal Palace) – 24 to 25 July

Horse Racing – King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes (Ascot) – 25 July
Glorious Goodwood (Goodwood) – 28 July to 1 August

St Leger (Doncaster) – 12 September

Sailing – Cowes Week (Isle of Wight) – 1 to 8 August

Let's hope the weather is kind to all of us this summer and that all our sporting events over the coming months bring us great drama, excitement and a thrashing for the Australian cricket team!!




SOURCING THE RIGHT VEHICLE FOR YOU

Autolocate are a professional, fully accredited, friendly company, who specialise in assisting overseas clients with any vehicle related matter, throughout the duration of their assignment in the UK.

cars bought

We alleviate the time, expense and stress involved, by finding a suitable car, at a competitive price, in the minimum of time.

cars sourced

We will also pay a competitive price for your vehicle when you leave the UK.

cars sold

Autolocate will deliver, collect, are available seven days a week and have built a reputation for reliability and service to our clients.

cars rented

We are an affiliate member of 'The Association of Relocation Professionals' and are recommended by 'Cambridge University Visiting Scholars Society.'



For further information or a brochure please contact Geoff Norman on 01737 830213

affiliate member On e-mail: info@autolocate.uk.com



Established in London since 1919




Succulent English Spring Lamb

Aberdeen Angus Scotch Beef

Open 8.00am to 5.45pm Monday to Saturday

Daily Deliveries.

Same day deliveries please call before 10.30am.

Telephone 020 7722 2258

www.kents-butchers.co.uk

59 St. John's Wood High Street, London NW8 7NL.