

Watson on road to recovery

AFP, Melbourne
Injured Australian all-rounder Shane Watson said on Wednesday he was on target for a comeback to cricket next (southern) summer.

The Tasmanian was forced out of the February-March World Cup campaign and the current West Indies tour when diagnosed with stress fractures in his back in late January.

After spending three months wearing a back brace, Watson will begin work with former Test fast bowler great Dennis Lillee in June on changing his bowling action to avoid any repeat of the injury.

"The rehabilitation's going pretty well," Watson said here on Wednesday.

"I've already had three months of total rest and I've still got another month of that to go before I get back into running and start work on remodelling my action."

The re-emergence of Andrew Symonds and Andy Bichel's form with bat and ball at the World Cup mean Watson will face a stiff challenge to return to the national one-day team, even when he does reach full fitness.

But the 21-year-old Tasmanian on Wednesday received a big boost when he was named among the 25 Australian Cricket Board contracted players for 2003-04.

"It's something you work for each year to be an ACB contracted player," Watson said.

"To be given another contract this year is a great thrill.

"Getting one last year in my first year was a very exciting time. It gives you a little bit more security which helps."

Big break

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Warwickshire.

"He is due to return home before departing for England early next month. It is a big honour for Collins and Kenya," added Otieno, who himself played in the British American Tobacco in the Southampton league in 1999-2000.

The younger Obuya, who took 13 wickets in his nine games of the World Cup, will become the first Kenyan to play in an English county side.



TEN Sports

Sri Lanka vs New Zealand
First Test, Day One
Live at 10:30 am

ESPN

Western Union World Football
Taped Version at 10:30 am
UEFA Champions League
AC Milan vs Ajax
Repeat at 3:30 pm &

Man United vs Real Madrid
Repeat at 6:00 pm
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

Bangladesh vs South Africa
First Test, Day Two
Live at 9:45 am
Sportline Tonight
Sport News
Live at 8:00 pm



PHOTO: AFP

Australia fast bowler Jason Gillespie unsuccessfully appeals for an lbw decision against Ramnaresh Sarwan of West Indies on the fifth day of the Port-of-Spain Test on Wednesday.

Target whitewash

Cricket

REUTERS, Port-of-Spain

Australia's all-conquering cricket team, constantly looking for new motivations, are eyeing the possibility of handing West Indies their first whitewash in the Caribbean.

Australia have won the first two Tests of the four-match series by nine wickets and 118 runs without Glenn McGrath, one of the world's most successful fast bowlers who will return for the third Test in Barbados next week.

McGrath, whose wife has been ill, joined the squad in Port-of-Spain on Wednesday and has already been guaranteed his place back.

Australia captain Steve Waugh, contemplating a whitewash, said: "It would certainly be a great achievement, it's probably in the back of our minds."

"We've got the best bowler in the world coming back into the side, there's no reason why we can't win the last two Test matches."

"We want to win the next Test and we want to improve. We played excellent cricket and we certainly won't be letting up in Barbados."

"Glenn McGrath will certainly come back into the side, and someone will have to make way, I'm not sure who that is going to be."

The Australians, who whitewashed West Indies 5-0 at home in 2000-1, came into the tour at the end of a long season which included winning the World Cup.

Waugh said that one of the reasons for Tuesday's early declaration -- which left West Indies four sessions to get 407 -- was to give his own team a challenge.

So far, however, Waugh has been delighted with his team's response, with lesser lights such as Darren Lehmann and Stuart MacGill taking the opportunity to shine.

Lehmann, never fully established in the Test side, hit his maiden century in Port-of-Spain while MacGill, playing his 21st Test, passed the 100-wicket mark.

"It was pleasing to see some of the guys who are not high profile like Andy Bichel and Darren Lehmann doing well," said Waugh.

"This is something I like about this team. It's not just about one or two players. It's about everyone doing something at different times."

Waugh, who did not bat in either innings in Port-of-Spain, said he was hoping to contribute more in

Bridgetown.

"I will certainly remember this Test because I got no runs, no wickets and no catches," he said.

"I want to make sure I play well in the next Test, I'm looking forward to getting out in the middle and getting some runs."

West Indies captain Brian Lara said he did not want to dwell on the previous two matches as he attempts to lift his young team.

They are under fire in particular for their bowling -- they took only seven wickets in Port-of-Spain as Australia declared in both innings.

"We've got a team with an average age of 24 or 25, and we are playing the world champions in one-day cricket and the best Test side," he said.

"We have to look ahead and try not to make the same mistakes again. Even my dismissal (for 122) was a bit dodgy. We don't want to go in Barbados with a burden because we are losing 2-0, we want to look forward."

"Competing is very important for this young team and as far as I'm concerned we are competing."

He added: "I don't know if anyone here follows horse-racing but maybe

Murali Kiwis' only worry

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

New Zealand go into the first Test against Sri Lanka here from Friday with a one-point agenda: keep prolific off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan at bay.

Kiwi captain Stephen Fleming admitted his side would have been favourites to win the two-match series if Muralitharan was not around, adding Sri Lanka was not half the side without him.

"They've got the biggest strikepower in the world in Murali," Fleming said of the spin wizard who has claimed an astonishing 437 wickets in just 78 Tests.

"He can turn a match at any point. Without him, Sri Lanka are not a very successful side."

During the last Test series between the two teams, six years ago in Sri Lanka, Muralitharan grabbed 19 wickets in three matches as the hosts came from behind to win 2-1.

Fleming, who ended that series as the highest scorer on both sides with 359 runs at a superb average of 71.80, said Muralitharan was a bigger menace now.

With the first Test to be played on Muralitharan's club ground at the Tamil Union here and the second in his home city of Kandy, the Kiwis clearly have their task cut out.

Sri Lanka, under new captain Hashan Tillakaratne after Sanath Jayasuriya stepped down last week to concentrate on his cricket, could field as many as four spinners for the first Test.

Besides Murali and left-arterer Jayasuriya, the Sri Lankans have three other spinners in Kumar Dharmasena, Upul Chandana and newcomer

Kaushalya Lokuarachchi to choose from if they decide to play only five specialist batsmen.

"The Tamil Union square usually takes a bit of turn, but we will have another look at the wicket on Friday before deciding whom to play," skipper Tillakaratne said.

New Zealand are one of the few non-Asian team to have done well in Sri Lanka, winning their inaugural series 2-0 in 1982 and losing just three of their nine Tests in this country.

Seasoned left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori, who took 17 wickets on the previous tour of Sri Lanka, and the recalled Paul Wiseman are expected to share the attack with the new ball duo of Shane Bond and Daryl Tuffey.

The batting, depleted by the absence of Nathan Astle and Chris Cairns through injury and Craig McMillan because of poor form, will revolve around Fleming and the in-form Mark Richardson.

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND (from): Stephen Fleming (captain), Matthew Horne, Mark Richardson, Lou Vincent, Matthew Sinclair, Scott Styris, Robbie Hart, Ian Butler, Jacob Oram, Daryl Tuffey, Daniel Vettori, Paul Wiseman, Richard Jones, Ian Butler.

SRI LANKA (from): Hashan Tillakaratne (captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Marvan Atapattu, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardena, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Michael Vandort, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Muttiah Muralitharan, Kumar Dharmasena, Kaushalya Lokuarachchi, Upul Chandana, Chaminda Vaas, Prabath Nissanka, Darshana Gamage. Impres: Daryl Harper (Australia) and



PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand spinner Daniel Vettori bowls in the nets during a practice session in Colombo yesterday.

Clarke earns ACB deal

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Rising batsman Michael Clarke on Wednesday was rewarded for his brilliant domestic season with an Australian Cricket Board playing contract, the ACB said.

The 22-year old New South Wales right-hander is in the West Indies with the Australian Test team after breaking into the national one-day team earlier this year.

Clarke, who scored 763 runs in Sheffield Shield cricket last season, is looked on as part of the next generation of Australian Test cricketers.

"I'm absolutely thrilled that my hard work over the past few years is paying off," Clarke said in an ACB statement.

"I've been happy with my form and with the fact that I was able to step up when given the opportunity to play for Australia A and then Australia."

"Hopefully, more opportunities will come my way next year, so I can continue to live the childhood dream of plying my trade in Australian colours."

Disgraced leg-spinner Shane Warne, serving a 12-month ban for drugs, was also retained as one of the 25 contracted players, though he will be paid part of his retainers on a pro-rata basis when his ban is lifted next February.

Captain Steve Waugh, who turns 38 in June and whose Test future was in the balance up to his brilliant century against England in the fifth Sydney Ashes Test last January, also received a new contract.

Brad Hogg, the West Australian allrounder who nows plays in the Australian team in Warne's absence, was handed his first full-year contract after being upgraded during the last 2002-03 season.

Queensland fast bowling prospect Ashley Noffke, also in the West Indies with the national team, was offered his

second ACB contract as he is regarded as a potential understudy to Glenn McGrath.

Retired Australian batsman Mark Waugh, his NSW teammate Stuart Clark and West Australian Mike Hussey were dropped from the contracted players' list.

The ACB said contracted players will be given a pay rise, with their minimum retainer up to 125,000 dollars (75,000 USD) and match fees increased by 10 per cent to 12,100 dollars (7,260 USD) per Test and 4,850 dollars (2,910 USD) per one-day international.

The contracted players are paid a base retainer, which is levelled according to a player ranking system decided by the national selectors.

The ACB said each contracted player also receives match fees, tour fees and prizemoney for on-field success.

ACB chief executive James Sutherland said the selectors had a difficult task each season in nominating 25 players for the contracts.

"With an average age of 29, the list for this year boasts a good mix of youth and experience and presents a talented crop from which to choose the Australian team," Sutherland said in the statement.

Sutherland said the selectors nominate the players based on their form over the past 12 months and their likelihood of Australian selection over the next 12 months.

CONTRACTED PLAYERS

Michael Bevan (age: 32), Andy Bichel (32), Nathan Bracken (25), Michael Clarke (22), Adam Gilchrist (31), Jason Gillespie (28), Ian Harvey (31), Nathan Hauritz (21), Matthew Hayden (31), Brad Hogg (32), Justin Langer (32), Brett Lee (26), Darren Lehmann (33), Martin Love (29), Stuart MacGill (32), Glenn McGrath (33), Jimmy Maher (29), Damien Martyn (31), Ashley Noffke (25), Ricky Ponting (28), Andrew Symonds (27), Shane Warne (33), Shane Watson (21), Stephen Waugh (37), Brad Williams

Cullinan's new

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record of 274, which was the highest Test score for a South African. So I think I was pretty happy to become the highest individual Test run scorer for South Africa at that moment.

DSS: Do you think you retired prematurely?

DC: I could have played more but I think certain things went against that intention. But still I look back at my career with full satisfaction. I have played a lot of cricket. I played with some of the great players in my time. And if I look back I am grateful and pleased with that.

DSS: What are you doing now after retiring?

DC: I am doing some coaching back home. I am establishing my own academy, which I would really love to see flourishing. I think there is a need for it and I love being involved with the young players and teach them cricket.

DSS: How do you remember your late captain Hansie Cronje?

DC: I remember him as a cricketing friend and a fine cricketer and a fine captain. May he rest in peace.

Kuerten cruises

AFP, Barcelona

Gustavo Kuerten advanced into the quarterfinals of the one-million-euro Barcelona Open on Thursday without lifting a racket as Moroccan opponent Younes El Aynaoui was unable to play after going down with a fever.

The seventh-seeded Brazilian, who underwent hip surgery in February, 2002, will await an opponent from top seed Juan Carlos Ferrero and Italian qualifier Filippo Volandri, playing a third-round match later Thursday.

El Aynaoui, 31 and seeded ninth, has lost to Kuerten in two previous three-set matches, at Monte Carlo two years ago and on carpet in Lyon, France, in 2002.

Of the day's eight matches, five feature Spanish players, with six home contenders still in the chase at the Real Club de Tenis.

English county cricket scores

AFP, London

English county cricket championship scores on Monday (first day of four):

FIRST DIVISION

At Canterbury: Kent 245 (G Blewett 57, M Carberry 55) v Leicestershire 101-3

At Old Trafford: Lancashire 354 (M Loye 113, A Flintoff 97, S Elworthy 5-71) v Nottinghamshire

At Lord's: Sussex 239 (T Ambrose 51) v Middlesex 79-4

At Edgbaston: Warwickshire 411-7 (D Brown 120, J Troughton 107 no, T Frost 59) v Essex

SECOND DIVISION

At Cardiff: Hampshire 381-5 (R Smith 92, N Pothas 81 no, J Crawley 65) v Glamorgan

At Northampton: Northamptonshire 338-8 (M Powell 60, D Sales 59, D Paynter 50, M Ball 4-97) v Gloucestershire

At Taunton: Durham 185 (J Lewis 78, R Johnson 5-64) v Somerset 126-5 (M Trescothick 60)

At Derby: Derbyshire 511-5 (S Selwood 157, D Hewson 153, Shahid Afridi 59, A Gait 54) v Bradford/Leeds

Australia is Australia

FROM PAGE 13

Bichel's wickets in a three-over spurt, had the Windies tumbling from 210 for three to 228 for six.

Once Lara went three overs later for his 20th Test century and first at his Port of Spain ground it was only a matter of time before the relentless Australians closed in on victory after dominating the match on a crumbling flat pitch.

Vice-captain Ricky Ponting was named man-of-the-match for his highest Test score of 206 in Australia's declared first innings of 576 for four.

Lara, yet again, dominated the Australian bowling, particularly in the morning session when he blasted 53 runs to claim one of his finest Test centuries before his adoring Trinidad fans.

Once he was out, attempting to cut a wide Stuart MacGill delivery to Matthew Hayden at slip, sections of the large crowd began drifting out of the ground realising it was all over even with three wickets left.

"It was a really good performance here, it was difficult to take 20 wickets on a very flat pitch," Waugh said at the victory presentation.

"I made the declaration yesterday because I wanted to have a lot of overs at the West Indies batsmen. I knew it was going to be tough to take the wickets and sometimes you need to set your side a bit of a challenge."

"407 runs was gettable from the West Indies' point of view, but for us we

needed to get fired up, that was the challenge that was required."

"Those three wickets by Andy Bichel after lunch were crucial and it really turned it around for us and at that point in the game it was probably 50-50, the West Indies would have thought they were a chance of winning the game, so it was a couple of handy wickets there."

Lara said Australia's fast scoring, both in Guyana and here, had been a decisive factor in their victories.

"The Australian team scored very quickly and that's where we have to place the importance in our remaining Test matches," Lara said. "Their run rate is what is causing us the problem at the moment."

Lara's wonderful 208-ball century, laced with 13 boundaries and a six on a wearing wicket, was one of the match highlights, but he said in the end it was no avail.

"I thought that because of the pitch conditions my innings today was going to be very important, 100 was not what I was looking for, I was out to bat for as long as possible, hopefully for the entire day."

"It was to no avail at the end of the day, but I've got this one now and hopefully I go on and score many more (centuries) each time I play in Trinidad and Tobago."

Lara sent his home supporters into raptures with his first century in his 10th Test on his Port of Spain ground after five 50s and two scores in the 90s.

He received two thudding blows on his upper arm from searing Brett Lee bouncers and another whistled past his nose as he gyrate out of the projectile's path.

Lara passed Gary Sobers along the way as the West Indian scorer of most runs in the Caribbean, overtaking Sobers' aggregate of 4,075. Lara finished the Test on 4,124 runs.

Lee bowled a sensational spell of hostile pace bowling to keep the pressure on Lara and Sarwan, who provided his captain with stoic support during the important morningsession.

The West Indies were bidding to become the first team in Test cricket history to score more than 406 to win a Test in the fourth innings.

India's 406 for 4 to beat the West Indies at this ground in 1976 stands as the highwater mark.

The highest a West Indian team had scored in the fourth innings to win a Test match was 348 for 5 against New Zealand in Auckland in 1969.

The third Test begins in Bridgetown, Barbados on May 1 when pace spearhead Glenn McGrath is expected to play again after a rushed trip home to be with his ill wife in Sydney.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the second Test between Australia and the West Indies at Queen's Park Oval on Tuesday: AUSTRALIA: First innings 576 for 4

declared (R Ponting 206, D Lehmann 160, A Gilchrist 101 not out; M Dillon 2-124)

WEST INDIES: First innings 408 (D Ganga 117, B Lara 91, M Samuels 68; B Lee 4-69, J Gillespie 3-50)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 238 for 3 declared (M Hayden 100 not out, D Lehmann 66; M Dillon 2-64)

WEST INDIES: Second innings (over- night 107-3)

Hinds b MacGill 35
Smith lbw b Gillespie 0

Ganga c Hayden b Gillespie 2
Lara c Hayden b MacGill 122

Sarwan c Lehmann b Bichel 34
Samuels lbw b Bichel 1

Bernard c Hayden b Bichel 4
Baugh c Langer b Hogg 1

Drakes not out 26
Dillon c Bichel b Lee 13

Collins lbw b Gillespie 5
Extras: (b-25, lb-7, w-3, nb-10) 45
Total: (All out in 89.2 overs) 288

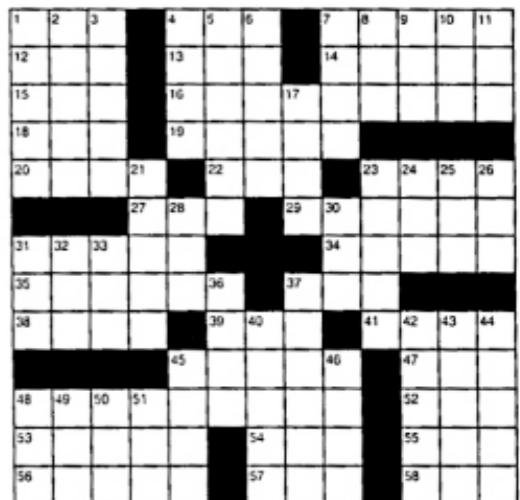
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-12, 3-107, 4-213, 5-222, 6-228, 7-238, 8-238, 9-270

Bowler O M R W
Lee 19 4 68 1
Gillespie 17.2 3 36 3

Bichel 13 3 21 3
Lehmann 7 0 20 0
MacGill 20 6 53 2
Hogg 13 1 58 1

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 White lie 47 Actor 7 Substantive gunfire 12 Ostrich's bousin 13 Tackle mogul 14... finest hour 15 Play-ground 16 Wheels of fortune? 18 Early bird? 19 Improve a text 20 1977 ELO song 22 Macabre writer 23 Layer of paint 27 Sob 29 Santa's transport 31 Dish 34 'Cats' setting 35 Heap 37 Scale member 38 'Lion King' baddie 39 E.T.'s craft 41 Impale insect 45 Facade 47 Actor 3 Hurray! 48 Desire, for one 52 Coffee shop vessel 53 Memorize 54 Downed 55 Hero of Spanish lit 56 Deviated off course 57 Do brick-work 58 Indispensable 11 Mined-over matter 17 Change for a live party 21 Thespian Solution time: 28 mins. HEY CAHO IDEW AGO AITO NORA YOGA AIE HO 31 OWV YOGARTI ADHERS NAM IHA ASH SAYSO DUMP WAO NDOO AMAMH WAS GTI OGLE FALITIT YODLEER GOR AMEN YOURSELF KIWI TONE ARE STYX EKEO 39 E.T.'s craft



CRYPTOQUIP

V A Q L V X N F X C D Y Q F F L A D F D Q B D K X E Q Y A N K Y A T C E K Q C Y D I Y Q O T L Q F ? O Q I L X K X O Q K T I . Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU HELPED BUY A BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR A SCULPTOR, YOU COULD SAY YOU CHIPPED IN. Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals R

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 192. Tick the correct answers, post to The Daily Star. Win attractive prizes. Competition closes at 8 pm April 25, 2003 and draw shortly afterwards. 1. Who was the man-of-the-tournament in the Cricket World Cup? Tendlukar, Ganguly, Lee. 2. Who was the man-of-the-match in the World Cup final? Ponting, Bichel, McGrath. 3. What was the lowest score in the World Cup? 36, 40, 43. 4. What was the highest score in the World Cup? 359, 345, 394. Name, Class, Roll No., School Address, Phone (if any).