

Warne wants Harwood for SA Tests

AFP, Melbourne

Shane Warne urged Australian selectors Friday to pick his Victorian teammate Shane Harwood for this month's Test series in South Africa.

Warne said although Michael Kasprowicz, Jason Gillespie or Shaun Tait would adequately replace Glenn McGrath — who is staying at home to support his wife through cancer treatment — he believed Harwood could also do the job.

Test cricket's leading wicket-taker said Harwood had proved himself an expert exponent of performing on unresponsive, flat wickets in Australia and could do the same in South Africa.

"The times we've been to South Africa, there have been absolute flat roads," the master leg-spinner said in Melbourne Friday.

"I bowled 70 overs in one (innings) in Cape Town, where the first Test is, which is flat. So you need flat wicket bowlers."

"That's what Harwood is very good at. On a flat wicket, he's bowled four games here at the Junction Oval — he's a very, very good flat wicket bowler."

"I'd be looking at the conditions that the players bowl in and that's why I'd be leaning towards Harwood because he plays on this sort of wicket."

Kasprowicz, with 40 wickets, and Gillespie (31) have been stars in the domestic Sheffield Shield this season as they attempt to resurrect their international careers, while Tait is nearing his best after returning from extensive shoulder surgery.

Harwood, 32, has taken 24 wickets at 28.62 for Victoria this season and averages 29.41 at the batsman-friendly Junction Oval.

The selectors will consider this weekend the best fast bowler to replace McGrath, who will not tour South Africa so to be with his wife Jane, who is battling breast cancer.

The squad is expected to be announced early next week ahead of the first Test on March 16.

Bashar promises

FROM PAGE 12
BANGLADESH: Second innings 181 (Rafique 40, Nafees 38; Muralidaran 6-54)

SRI LANKA: Second innings (over-125-0)

Vandort not out 64
Tharanga c Nafees b Raseel 19
Sangakkara c and b Enamul 46
Jayawardene not out 26
Extras: (b-5, lb-4, nb-2) 11
Total: (For two wickets in 37 overs) 166
Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-115

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Raseel	4	4	18	1
Shahadat	8	1	39	0
Enamul	9	1	50	1
Rafique	8	0	28	0
Kapali	2	0	6	0
Ashraf	2	0	16	0

Result: Sri Lanka won by eight wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Ashraf.
Toss: Bangladesh
Umpires: Asad Rauf (PAK) and Steve Bucknor (WIS)

Pak cricketers

FROM PAGE 12
couple of senior players who will go to Islamabad with board chairman Shaharyar Khan. We have just been told they have to attend the cricket match which is expected to be witnessed by Bush," Zaidi told Reuters.

Bush had expressed a desire to see a cricket match on his tour of South Asia, he said.

Cricket is passionately played and followed in south Asia and is the most popular sport in Pakistan, where President Pervez Musharraf is also the chief patron of the cricket board.

Pakistani captain Inzamamul Haq, vice captain Younis Khan and opener Salman Butt have been asked by the board to go to Islamabad for Saturday's game, Zaidi said.

Bush is arriving in Pakistan from neighbouring India and is expected to leave for home late on Saturday.

Ks the rescuers

FROM PAGE 12
Sehwag c Pietersen b Hoggard 2
David lbw b Hoggard 40
Tendulkar lbw b Panesar 16
Laxman lbw b Hoggard 0
Kaif b Panesar 91
Dhoni c Jones b Flintoff 5
Pathan c Flintoff b Hoggard 2
Kumble c Cook b Harmison 58
Harbhajan not out 0
Extras: (b-17, lb-3, nb-2, w-5) 27
Total: (For nine wickets in 135.4 overs) 322
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-140, 3-149, 4-149, 5-176, 6-183, 7-190, 8-318, 9-322

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	30	13	57	5
Harmison	27	5	75	1
Flintoff	29	10	68	1
Panesar	41.4	19	72	2
Blackwell	7	0	28	0
Bell	1	0	2	0

Toss: England
Umpires: Ian Howell (RSA) and Aleem Dar (PAK)

PREMIERSHIP

Cole wants longer reign

Football

AFP, London

Joe Cole is hoping his match-winning performance for England in midweek impressed Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho as much as it did Sven Goran Eriksson.

Cole's emergence as an integral part of Eriksson's national squad has matched his progress under Mourinho and his exuberant all-round display in the 2-1 win over Uruguay confirmed he will travel to the World Cup having made England's problem left-midfield spot his own.

Cole, though, has all too often been used as a substitute or been the player sacrificed when Mourinho or Eriksson has attempted to change the course of a game and the midfielder has managed a full 90 minutes in just ten of his forty appearances for club and country this season.

It was the midfielder who was sacrificed to accommodate a change in formation when Asier Del Horno was sent off after 40 minutes of Chelsea's recent Champions League first leg tie with Barcelona and Cole is hopeful the sight of him scoring a 92nd-minute winner on Wednesday can prompt Mourinho into a policy shift.

"I got taken off in the Barcelona game and again at the weekend I didn't play the full 90 so playing 90 minutes against Uruguay for me

was great," the 24-year-old said.

"I play my best football when I play 90 minutes. I build myself up into the game and as it opens up, that is when I can do the most damage."

"Teams like Chelsea sit back and sit back and sometimes it is only in the last 20 minutes you can really do your stuff. And on Wednesday night it was 92 minutes — I don't know how my legs carried me into the box!"

Chelsea will be without Frank Lampard, who is also doubtful for the second leg in Barcelona next week after tweaking a hamstring while training with England.

With Manchester United not in action until Monday night's trip to Wigan, Liverpool can leapfrog their northwest rivals into second place when they entertain Wigan at Anfield.

Manager Rafael Benitez will be looking for more of the same from giant striker Peter Crouch, who scored England's first goal on Wednesday night.

Crouch acknowledges that he is always likely to be starting on the bench for his country if Wayne Rooney and Michael Owen are fit, but his confidence has been given a major boost by comments from England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson implying he is a sure pick for Germany.

"I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe I was good enough to be here and hopefully I can perform well for my club and try to get to the World Cup," Crouch said.

Ruud van Nistelrooy is doubtful for United's trip to Wigan after pulling out of Holland's midweek friendly win over Ecuador with a stomach complaint.

Arsenal make the short trip across London to face Fulham seeking to close the gap on local rivals Tottenham, who currently occupy the fourth and final qualifying spot for next season's Champions League.

The Gunners will also have half an eye on next week's Champions League last 16, second leg against Real Madrid, when they will be defending a 1-0 first leg advantage at Highbury.

Spurs will hope to maintain their edge in the race for fourth place by beating Blackburn at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT kick-off unless stated)
SATURDAY
Aston Villa v Portsmouth, Fulham v Arsenal, Liverpool v Charlton (1715), Middlesbrough v Birmingham, Newcastle v Bolton, West Brom v Chelsea (1245), West Ham v Everton
SUNDAY
Manchester City v Sunderland (1330), Tottenham v Blackburn (1600)
MONDAY
Wigan v Manchester Utd (2000)

SERIE A

Roma raring to go

Football

REUTERS, Rome

AS Roma turn their attention to the fierce competition for Champions League places when they host Inter Milan on Sunday as the dust settles on their record 11th consecutive Serie A win.

With 11 games left, only leaders Juventus seem secure of a place in Europe's top club competition next season.

They travel to Sampdoria on Saturday with a 10-point advantage over second-placed Milan, who host relegation-threatened Empoli.

Inter have 58 points and Roma 54, while Fiorentina, a further point behind, could climb back into the top four with a victory against mid-table Siena.

However, most of the attention this weekend will be focused on Rome's Olympic Stadium.

Roma's record-setting victory against city rivals Lazio last Sunday sparked celebrations reminiscent of those that followed the team's Serie A title win in 2001.

Fellow coaches, players, and pundits have been queuing up to heap praise on Roma coach Luciano Spalletti, the man credited with turning results around at a club that risked relegation a year ago.

One Inter player who knows

Spalletti better than most is midfielder David Pizarro.

The Chilean was one of the driving forces behind the Udinese side Spalletti guided to a fourth-place finish last season.

"To me it is no surprise he has been so successful," said Pizarro, who is expected to start in place of the injured Juan Sebastian Veron.

"He deserves the excellent results he has been getting. Roma are in great form, it will be difficult to beat them. They are particularly good on the break and we will have to be very concentrated, especially when we lose possession."

The one unknown in Roma's side is their lone striker Vincenzo Montella, who fills in for injured captain Francesco Totti, but has only recently returned from a lengthy layoff.

Inter are without striker Adriano, who is suspended, although the Brazilian's stand-in, Julio Cruz, has been in excellent form, scoring three times in his last two games.

Another striker more used to sitting on the bench but likely to start this weekend is Juventus' Alessandro Del Piero.

The 31-year-old, who scored in Italy's 4-1 midweek win over Germany, is expected to partner David Trezeguet in place of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who limped off with a knee injury during Sweden's 3-0 defeat to Ireland.

Juventus are heavily tipped to beat a Sampdoria side that was pushing hard for a Champions League place 12 months ago but has faltered and lost the last two games against Ascoli and Siena.

Of the top teams, Milan has the easiest-looking fixture against the Empoli, whose four-month run without a win has left them 18th in the 20-team division.

The Tuscan side's porous defence should give Milan's strikers an opportunity to add to their recent impressive haul.

Between them, Filippo Inzaghi, Andriy Shevchenko, and Alberto Gilardino have hit the target 11 times in Milan's last four matches and will be eager to lead the side to its fifth Serie A win in a row.

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT kick-off unless stated)
SATURDAY
AC Milan v Empoli (1700), Sampdoria v Juventus (1930)
SUNDAY
Chievo v Lazio, Fiorentina v Siena, Lecce v Palermo, Livorno v Cagliari, Messina v Parma, Roma v Inter Milan (1930), Treviso v Reggina, Udinese v Ascoli

Zaragoza mayor invites Eto'o

REUTERS, Madrid

The mayor of Zaragoza has invited Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o to visit the Spanish city with his family in order to prove that the citizens there are not racist.

The Cameroon striker tried to leave the pitch last Saturday after Real Zaragoza fans directed racist abuse at the player during their Primera Liga match.

Barca coach Frank Rijkaard and players persuaded him to finish the game, though the insults continued to the end.

"I wasn't at the game but I heard it on the radio and was ashamed. I was so outraged I decided to do something," Mayor Juan Alberto Belloch was quoted as saying in El Pais newspaper on Friday.

In his invitation letter to Eto'o he said: "I would like to offer you the chance to meet the people of my city. Zaragoza is a friendly, open, tolerant and multi-cultural place."

"I would like to show you and your family the preparations we are working on to host Expo 2008, which should be a symbol of respect to cultures across the world."

Real Zaragoza were fined 9,000 euros (10,750 dollars) by the Spanish Football Federation for the incident, but the government run Anti-Violence Commission said in a statement on Wednesday the fine was insufficient.

Eto'o suggested Zaragoza's stadium be shut for a year to set an example.

Borg's Wimbledon trophies on sale

AFP, London

Bjorn Borg, the Swedish tennis player who became the first man to win five consecutive singles titles at Wimbledon, is to auction the trophies and the wooden-headed racket from his most famous match.

A number of British newspapers reported Friday that the player, famous for his headband, flowing locks and steely nerve on court, was putting the items up for sale with the racket with which he beat John McEnroe in the 1980 final.

They will go under the hammer at London auction house Bonhams' in June, The Times said.

The trophies, from the championships between 1976 and 1980, are expected to sell for between 200,000 and 300,000 pounds (291,000-437,000 euros, 350,000-525,000 dollars), a Bonhams' spokeswoman was quoted as saying.

Borg, 49, was quoted as saying it was not easy to part with the trophies but accepted he needed "some long-term financial security" for himself and family.

The ideal buyer would be either a tennis collector or "suitable institution where they can be appreciated by a wider number of people," he said.

"Even though the symbols of my victories are being sold, what I will always retain is the knowledge that for such a long period I was the supreme world champion," he added.

Borg won 11 Grand Slam titles between 1973 and 1981. After retiring, he went on to lose money to a number of business ventures and divorces.

His 1980 clash with McEnroe has been seen by many to be one of tennis' greatest games after a nailbiting fourth-set tiebreak went to 18-16 before Borg took the fifth set.

Benitez rules out Real move

INTERNET, undated

Rafa Benitez insists he is focused on Liverpool despite links with Real Madrid.

The Spanish press have reported this week that Fernando Martin, the new president at the Bernabeu, wants Benitez to lead his side in their quest for honours next season.

Martin regards the current campaign as a failure with the Madrid giants facing a Champions League exit at hands of Arsenal as well as trailing arch rivals Barcelona in the Primera Liga by 10 points.

Benitez has made it known that he wants to take control of the 'galacticos' in his career, but he has now told the Liverpool Echo that he is fully committed to the job at Anfield.

"I have a clear idea whenever anyone in Spain talks about this," Benitez said.

"I am focused on three competitions with my club, Liverpool. I want to win every game. I hear information from Spain, but my priority is the next game against Charlton, the Champions League and the FA Cup."

Akram Inswinger

FROM PAGE 12
Sangakkara is one of my favourite batsmen because of his attitude towards the game. He is now in very good touch and he could once again be the danger man for Bangladesh in the second Test.

At last I want to salute one player and it is none other than the champion spinner Muralidaran, who became the first bowler in the world to bag 1000 international wickets.

PRIMERA LIGA

Real stars must perform

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid's players fall under intense scrutiny in the Bernabeu on Saturday when they take on in-form neighbours Atletico Madrid in the city derby.

Florentino Perez's shock resignation from the Real presidency on Monday has rocked the club as he pointedly called into question the squad's commitment to the cause.

Disillusioned home fans will be keen to make their point after third-placed Real slipped 10 points behind Primera Liga leaders Barcelona last Sunday after a lacklustre 2-1 away defeat to Real Mallorca.

New president Fernando Martin was crystal clear with his views on the players on Thursday when he demanded 100 percent effort from each and every player.

"Those players who think they can stay here only giving the minimum amount of effort are wrong," said Martin.

"I'm not afraid to take tough decisions if people don't give their all for this club."

Real's six-match winning run in the league came to an end last weekend against a side who

showed a greater fighting spirit and willingness to compete.

Their next opponents, ninth-placed Atletico, have shown similar traits in turning round their season recently, and come into the game with their tails up after six straight victories.

But Atletico are wary of how Real's players will respond to recent events.

Midfielder Peter Luccin told sports daily Marca: "We know they are going through a difficult moment and we hope to profit from that."

"We don't fear them but we know they will be keen to give their all to try and win back the support of their fans."

While Atletico appear to hold a spell over league leaders Barcelona they have consistently failed to rise to the occasion against Real of late.

They have not beaten Real since returning to the top flight in 2002.

Atletico have injury doubts over Argentine trio Maxi Rodriguez, Ariel Ibagaza and Luciano Galletti.

Real have defender Sergio Ramos suspended while Guti is struggling to recover from a thigh injury. Coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro may look to rest players ahead of next week's Champions League clash with Arsenal in London.

Barcelona, who hold an eight-point lead over second-placed Valencia, have home advantage

against an unpredictable Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday.

With their two closest rivals dropping points last weekend while they beat Real Zaragoza 2-0 away, Barca believe the title is theirs to lose.

"Barcelona's main rivals are Barcelona," goalkeeper Victor Valdes told the club website.

Depor, who are seventh, beat fourth-placed Osasuna 2-1 away last weekend but have Argentine defender Fabricio Coloccini suspended.

Valencia can extend their unbeaten run in the league to 15 games when they visit bottom club Malaga on Sunday.

FIXTURES

(1600 GMT kick-off unless stated)
SATURDAY
Cadiz v Espanyol (1700), Villarreal v Alaves (1700), Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid (1900), Barcelona v Deportivo La Coruna (2100)
SUNDAY
Celta Vigo v Osasuna, Getafe v Real Betis, Racing Santander v Real Mallorca, Real Sociedad v Real Zaragoza, Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao (1800), Malaga v Valencia (2000)

Italy won't repeat '74 mistakes: Riva



REUTERS, Rome

Former Italy striker Luigi Riva believes the Azzurri's team spirit will prevent them repeating one of their most infamous World Cup failures when they contest this year's finals in Germany.

A 4-1 midweek win over the Germans has sent expectations soaring — "World champions, for today" read the front page of La Gazzetta dello Sport — but also recalls the team that slumped out of the last finals held in Germany in 1974.

Italy are now unbeaten in 16 matches and have defeated the Netherlands as well as Germany, who they trounced in a friendly in Florence on Wednesday, in the past four months.

They have been drawn in Group E with Ghana, the United States and

the Czech Republic at the 2006 World Cup.

In 1974 the Azzurri went into the tournament on the back of a 14-game unbeaten streak stretching back two years, including wins over Brazil and England, but were eliminated in the first phase from a group containing Haiti, Poland and Argentina.

"It won't finish like it did in 1974," 62-year-old Riva was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Friday.

"That (Italy team) was a strong team, but we ruined our chances even before we left for Germany."

"The bickering and arguments between the players had a big effect on results."

"On one side there was Giorgio Chinaglia, who had just won the Serie A title with Lazio, on the other there was Gianni Rivera."

"There had always been problems (between the two), but they had never been cleared up. They seemed to have disappeared, then they resurfaced during the tournament."

Riva, who scored 35 goals in 42 appearances for Italy and now accompanies the squad on their travels, said he would use his experience to prevent a repeat of past mistakes.

"I will tell them (the players) that the World Cup is a different and more difficult competition than the European championships."

"If everything goes to plan you are obliged to stay together for more than 50 days."

"You can't afford to get depressed if the first match doesn't go well. Too much confidence if you start well can be very dangerous too."

"The objective is a long way off and if you don't have everyone pulling together, you won't get anywhere."

Riva believes the present attack-minded team is better than the rigidly defensive side of 1974.

"On paper it is better than the team of '74, but obviously we will need to see how it looks closer to the World Cup."

Federer in Dubai Open final

Tennis

AFP, Dubai

World number one Roger Federer reached his ninth successive final and extended his Open era record-winning streak on hard courts to 56 when he beat Mikhail Youzhny 6-3, 6-2 in the Dubai Open.

The Russian has often beaten the Swiss star in practice sessions but never in competition, and once again Federer showed what a supreme exponent of the art of match play he is.

Whenever there was a hint of trouble on his serve, he found a change of gear, and during a rally he had the capacity suddenly to prepare a little earlier for a ball, to strike it a little more cleanly, and to produce an unexpectedly telling blow.

It was also Federer's best performance so far in the tournament, which is his first since winning the Australian Open more than a month ago, and increased the feeling that this will become the first title he has won four times.

"Mikhail had many chances early on, when he could have got a lead,

but I got him back," said Federer, who was soon into a 3-0 lead despite being love-4-0 in both his first two service games.

"It's hard when you get a start like he did, to stay positive. He knows I am going to pick up my game and then he's not going to get so many chances."

"In the second set I think I played great tennis and I am very happy with the way I played this time."

The crowd tried to raise Youzhny's morale when he was making his first attempt to hold serve in the second set, cheering him loudly. But the best he could manage was seven deuces and four game points before dropping his serve with a double fault.

Youzhny looked to have converted the second game point when he drove a ball hard and diagonally into the backhand corner and had Federer racing into a wide and deep position.

But from there the holder of three Grand Slams titles conjured an improbable flat backhand winner with his back half turned to the net, which flashed parallel to the sideline and a couple of inches inside it.