

Fidel's fast aspiration

AFP, London

Fidel Edwards has set his sight on becoming the first West Indies bowler to smash the 100mph barrier and admitted he likes nothing better than spying fear in a batsman's eyes.

In an interview with The Wisden Cricketer magazine, Edwards revealed his desire to emulate Shoab Akhtar and Brett Lee, the only two bowlers to have had deliveries officially recorded at more than 100 mph (160kph).

The 24-year-old from Barbados said: "My main objective is to break the 100mph bowling mark and try to end up as one of the great fast bowlers. I want to end with at least 200 or 300 wickets."

The sight of Edwards laughing after hitting a batsman has led to him being dubbed "The Smiling Assassin," and he admitted: "Mostly I like running in and seeing the fear in the batsman's eyes and knowing they are intimidated."

Sreesanth ready for challenge

BBC ONLINE, undated

India paceman Sri Sreesanth says the triangular series in Sri Lanka involving the hosts, his team and South Africa should be highly competitive.

He told BBC News: "The way we have been performing in the last six months, there's a good series in the offing."

Also, Sri Lanka have been performing very well. They have good batting with (Sanath) Jayasuriya and (Upul) Tharanga and it is going to be challenging."

Sri Lanka recently toured England, winning a one-day series there 5-0.

Sreesanth, a 22-year-old former national break dance champion, was first called into the Indian squad for a one-day series last October, in a series also against Sri Lanka.

The India squad for the upcoming tour will be announced on Thursday in Mumbai.

Sreesanth feels the Indian team could do well in next year's World Cup in the Caribbean despite losing a recent series there 4-1.

"It was a good experience in the Caribbean. Our pace attack is on the right track with Irfan Pathan, Munaf Patel and VRV Singh bowling very well," he said.

However, the Indian team did not expect slow wickets in West Indies.

"Earlier, I thought wickets there would be very quick but once the one-day and the Test matches started off, we realised they are slow wickets."

He said the most valuable wicket in the opponent team was that of Brian Lara.

"You cannot get him out with a short ball. I realised that in Antigua. I spoke to Virender Sehwag and Anil Kumble, who gave me suggestions."

"But I was fortunate I was part of the team which created history by winning the Test series."

Sports Journos Day observed

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Sports Writers' Association (BSWA) accorded reception to journalists Mozam Hossain and Aminul Haider Chowdhury at National Sports Council yesterday.

The BSWA, an International Sports Press Association affiliated body, observed the World Sports Journalists Day by holding the reception, a discussion and bringing out a rally.

The World Sports Journalists Day was actually observed worldwide on July 2. But, it was delayed in Bangladesh due to the FIFA World Cup.

Earlier, State Minister for Youth and Sports M Fazlur Rahman inaugurated the impressive rally that turned into a procession, which began at the Shishu Academy and ended at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium. A large number of organisers, players and journalists took part in it.

Pro League

FROM PAGE 17 refused to make any comments on the rumours but said that the BFF wants to hold the polls before the elections of the Asian Football Confederation in May 2007.

"Election will be among the agendas at the AGM but only the councillors can take a decision," he added.

Meanwhile, the federation has decided to send the under-17 national team to Vietnam for a four-nation tournament. The U-17s, now preparing under coach Mahub Hossain Roxy for the Asian Youth Football Championships finals to be held in Singapore this October, will play against Laos, Myanmar and hosts Vietnam in the August 12-16 meet.



American Serena Williams celebrates after beating Russian Anastasia Myskina at the Western & Southern Financial Group Women's Open in Mason on Tuesday.

Serena off to a flier

Tennis

AFP, Cincinnati

Serena Williams got off to a strong start in her first tournament in six months, by dominating second seed Anastasia Myskina 6-2, 6-2 in the first round of the Cincinnati Open.

In her first match in six months, the American Williams pounded her way past the Russian on Tuesday.

The hardcourt match up of Grand Slam winners was no contest. Williams showed virtually no rust, scoring service breaks in each set to make quick work of Myskina, the 2004 French Open champion.

A seven-time Grand Slam champion, the 24-year-old Williams took the court for the first

time since the Australian Open in January due to a left knee injury.

She missed the entire clay court and grasscourt seasons, including the French Open and Wimbledon.

The prolonged inactivity dropped Williams -- once the top women's player in the world -- from 11th to 140th in the rankings.

Williams is trying to develop a rhythm leading up to the US Open, which she has won twice.

Myskina was the only seeded player to lose Tuesday as five others advanced to the second round.

Fourth seed Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia defeated Rossana De Los Rios of Paraguay, 6-3, 7-6 (7-3).

Srebotnik will face China's Meng Yuan, who defeated Mariana Diaz-Oliva of Argentina, 6-3, 7-5.

Fifth-seeded Serbian Jelena

Jankovic comfortably moved on with a 6-3, 6-2 triumph over Ukrainian Olga Savchuk.

She awaits Italian Maria Elena Camerin, who routed American lucky loser Carly Gullickson -- the daughter of former Cincinnati Reds pitcher Bill Gullickson -- 6-1, 6-1.

Sixth seed Marion Bartoli of France defeated Taiwanese qualifier Chin-Wei Chan, 6-2, 6-3. She will face Russian qualifier Vasilisa Bardina, who eliminated Czech Hana Sromova, 6-7 (3-7), 6-4, 6-2.

Next up for Williams could be Shenay Perry, who reached the fourth round of Wimbledon, the best showing of any American. Perry is facing Bethanie Mattek.

Also advancing to the second round were No. 8 Gisela Dulko of Argentina and No. 9 Sania Mirza of India.

Razzaq to miss tour match

CRICINFO, undated

After losing several of their key players because of injuries earlier this summer, Pakistan are now facing further fitness problems with all-rounder Abdul Razzaq suffering from a back problem following the first Test at Lord's.

"Razzaq says he has a painful back after his final day's outing," said Zaheer Abbas, the Pakistan team manager, who added that Razzaq had requested the team management to rest him in the four-day game against Northamptonshire beginning on July 20. Zaheer said that Razzaq's injury didn't seem serious and that he should be fit in time for the second Test at Old Trafford from July 27.

Razzaq, though, is not the only player who is unfit to play at Northampton. With the mercury soaring in the thirties, Zaheer said that around five to six players want to rest ahead of the Old Trafford Test. With just 15 players available for selection, the team management would find it difficult to have 11 willing players for the match against Northamptonshire under the blazing sun.

Zaheer said that the team management might ask some of the discarded Pakistan players settled in England to fill in if they are unable to find enough players from their camp to play the four-day game. "We might call players like Arshad Khan to come and play for us at Northampton."

Mushtaq Ahmed, the leg-spinner, also received the backing of Pakistan selectors for a possible recall for the Old Trafford Test.

"It all depends on the team's planning for the Test. Inzamam knows Mushtaq better than anyone else. If he wants to play him because of special circumstances, we will support him," Wasim Bari, the chief selector, told Reuters. "We have four to five injuries in the team and we have to look at things very differently and we need special thinking. By and large we support the captain."

Bari added that Asif and Shoab Malik, who returned to Pakistan earlier in the week with elbow injuries, would require at least four weeks to make full recoveries.

Otieno happy to be back

AFP, Nairobi

Kenyan top-order batsman and wicketkeeper Kennedy Otieno Obuya said Wednesday he was happy to be recalled into the national team for the upcoming ICC Intercontinental Cup against Canada after making up with the authorities.

The 34-year-old veteran player had been left of the 27-member training squad under head coach Roger Harper three weeks ago following his below-par performance during the tour of Bangladesh in March.

He was also dropped for the opening round match of the 2006 ICC Intercontinental Cup tie against the Netherlands in Nairobi in April during whom he announced his intentions of quitting international cricket.

But the batsman, only one of three Kenyans to have played in more than 60 ODIs for his country, said he was grateful that the Cricket Kenya selectors had given him another chance and was ready to resume his cricket.

"I am happy for the gesture. I just want to play again," said Obuya at the team's training ground at the Aga Khan sports centre on Wednesday.

SLC still

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"We have done our part and a promise was given to us by the country's president that the cricketers will have a larger say," Ranatunga told AFP.

"But after almost a week, the sports minister has not done anything. Frankly, there's nothing much we can do. Now it's in the hands of the minister."

Local media said Kumaratunga had delayed naming a new panel because he wanted his own appointee Dharmadasa to continue in office.

The power struggle in the country's richest sports body rumbled on as South Africa arrived in Colombo on Wednesday to play two Tests and a limited-overs tri-series also featuring India.

Real apologise

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announcement of a deal between the two clubs.

"Real would like to apologise for any misunderstanding caused by the error."

Spanish media have reported that Van Nistelrooy will sign a three-year deal with Real for a fee of around 14 million euros (17.54 million dollars), but Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson said on Tuesday that his club would not be selling the player cheaply.

Van Nistelrooy joined United for a then British record of 19 million

Roddick routs Delgado

Tennis

AFP, Indianapolis

Former world No 1 Andy Roddick lost just 13 points on serve as the second seed hammered Ramon Delgado 6-3, 6-2 to reach the third round of the Indianapolis Open.

Roddick, who now stands outside the top ten for the first time since late 2002, fired eight aces and improved his record to 13-1 at Indianapolis, which he won in 2003 and 2004.

After taking advice and a training session from former great Jimmy Connors after losing to Briton Andy Murray in the Wimbledon third round, Roddick returns to tennis refreshed and revived.

"I feel really motivated, I can't wait to get out there and play," said the American. "I played solid throughout, I wasn't defensive at all. I accomplished a lot of things that I wanted to."

Roddick ended his one-hour master class against Paraguay's Delgado with a concluding ace on a night of super serving.

"I feel a lot more prepared for the next weeks," said the two-time Wimbledon finalist. "We had a lot of tough training (with Connors) last week."

Jittery defending champion

Robby Ginepri overcame a double-fault on match point before finally carving out a 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 victory over Colombian Alejandro Falla.

It took the American defending champion another three games to prevail in two hours, 16 minutes over the challenger ranked 129.

Ginepri, seeded fourth, admitted that he froze on occasion as emotion took centre stage.

"I can't recall being this nervous in a match. I was worried about defending, but somehow I snuck through it," said the American who clocked 57 unforced errors.

"In matches like this, you really need the crowd support, they fire you up."

Ginepri managed 35 winners with Falla committing 61 errors.

The winner, 7-16 on the season, said he nearly ran out of puff. "I was absolutely exhausted. I wasn't playing close to my best tennis, but I found a way to win."

But 2006 has been a disappointment for Ginepri, beaten ten times in opening matches.

South Korea's Hyung-taik Lee halted the winning run of Mark Philippoussis as he eliminated the Aussie 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) in the first round.

Just two days after breaking a trophy drought, which had lasted for nearly three years, two-time, grand slam finalist Philippoussis was

unable to make the quick switch from grass to hardcourt.

The 29-year-old who cut his ranking almost in half to reach 125th in the world as he beat Justin Gimelstob in the weekend final of the ATP Newport event.

"It was tough out there, very humid," the Australian said. "The balls were flying through the air and I couldn't get used to it."

"I had no feel for the ball and no control. I was struggling, but I felt Ok physically. I'm a little disappointed, it was a good chance to get some practice."

The loss in which Philippoussis fired a dozen aces, was balanced by first-round win from 35-year-old Aussie qualifier Wayne Arthurs, who put out Israeli Harel Levy 6-3, 7-5.

South African Wesley Whitehouse eliminated Gimelstob 6-3, 7-5 in the opening round.

Chile's third-seeded Fernando Gonzalez got off to a quick start after a bye, reaching the third round over American teenager Sam Querrey 6-3, 6-4 in just 67 minutes.

Gonzalez brought the 18-year-old ranked 200 back to earth after Querrey's Monday win. The 16th-ranked Gonzalez improved 24-13 on the season.

American holder Robby Ginepri was beginning his title defence against Alejandro Falla of Colombia.



American Andy Rodick celebrates after beating Ramon Delgado of Paraguay at the RCA Championships in Indianapolis on Tuesday.

Gough done in by the dance!

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Darren Gough believes England's selectors are holding a grudge against him after his TV dancing antics.

Gough opted out of last winter's tours to spend time with his family but then appeared on a BBC talent show.

"I never give up and I'm determined to get back in but the only reason I'm not selected was the fact I did Strictly Come Dancing," he told BBC Five Live.

"The reason I took the winter off was to spend some time with my children and it was the best winter I've had."

He said of his decision: "I don't regret it one bit -- I spent some quality time with my children."

Gough, who turns 36 in September, retired from Test cricket three years ago but was part of the one-day side last summer, before deciding

against touring Pakistan and India.

Since his last appearance, England have lost 13 of their 16 one-day internationals, with one of their victories coming over Ireland.

Gough's 234 ODI wickets are 89 more than any other England bowler and more than the combined career tally of the attack used during the 5-0 series defeat to Sri Lanka.

The one-day side's next assignment is a five-match series against Pakistan, after the current Test matches, with two more 50-over tournaments before the World Cup.

Gough told the Simon Mayo programme: "A lot of people on commentary are saying, 'England's best bowler is playing for Essex.'"

"It's up to me to keep performing and let people push for me to get back in."

"If I don't get a recall for the Pakistan series, I'm not going to get the recall but I can only put in my performances on the field."

Renault keen on Kimi

BBC ONLINE, undated

Renault have set their sights on signing Kimi Raikkonen to replace world champion Fernando Alonso in 2007.

McLaren driver Raikkonen has been widely tipped to move to Ferrari, but Renault F1 president Alain Dasso said his team were also talking to the Finn.

"It's no secret, Raikkonen is our priority for the 2007 season," Dasso told Italy's Gazzetta dello Sport.

"We are talking with Raikkonen about a contract," Dasso said, describing him as "one of the greatest drivers".

He added that Renault would be "very satisfied" if the two parties could come to a definitive agreement.

Renault are also considering test driver Heikki Kovalainen as a partner for Giancarlo Fisichella, who is staying at the team.

But Dasso said the younger Finn's lack of experience was a negative.

"To have a driver with no experience like (Kovalainen) would be risky. In F1 nowadays, you need quick, immediate results, and it could be a problem to obtain them with a debutant."

Bent extends Charlton stay

AFP, London

England striker Darren Bent on Tuesday pledged his future to Charlton by signing a new four-year contract with the Premiership club.

Bent, 22, had been attracting interest from several top clubs, including Liverpool and Tottenham, but Charlton manager Iain Dowie has persuaded him to stay at The Valley.

The former Ipswich star, who made his England debut against Uruguay in March, was the top-scoring English striker in the Premiership last season with 18 goals.

Bent told Charlton's website: "I am delighted to bring to an end all the press speculation about my future."

"Although I am flattered to be linked with the biggest clubs in the country, I owe Charlton a lot after they gave me my chance in the Premiership."

Liam needs batting practice

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

England will allow fast bowler Liam Plunkett to play for Durham this week to let him work on his batting.

After scoring 56 in only his second one-day international Plunkett, 22, has struggled to bat at eight in the order.

"We're releasing him to play for Durham against West Indies A, mainly to get some batting under his belt in a match situation," said coach Duncan Fletcher.

"I think he could develop into a good bowling all-rounder who can bat at eight or nine, hopefully eight."

Plunkett will take part in the three-day game against the tourists, starting at the Riverside on Friday.

Plunkett's struggles at eight, in the absence of the injured Ashley Giles, have led to suggestions England could bring Andrew Flintoff back in his place, keeping the in-form Ian Bell at six.

Durham player Plunkett's bowling, which has been the main focus of scrutiny since he has stepped into the injury-ravaged England attack.

He has impressed many observers but took just three wickets, at a cost of 80.66 each, during the one-day series defeat to Sri Lanka and two wickets in last weekend's drawn Test with Pakistan.

But Darren Gough, England's leading one-day international wicket-taker, believes Plunkett will show his potential when he gains confidence.

"He is a little bit off target at the minute but I've seen him bowl over the last couple of years and he's a better bowler than he has shown this summer," Gough told BBC Five Live.

"A lot of it is lack of confidence. If you're not taking wickets you're searching a bit harder and you're not as relaxed."

"When you're taking wickets everything seems to go your way and click into place. When you're so young the pressure of playing Test cricket in the big arena is not easy."