

Glenn to get back his duties

CRICINFO, undated

John Buchanan has tipped Glenn McGrath to regain his opening bowling duties for the Ashes due to the magnificent "aura" he has created throughout his career.

McGrath will not have played a Test for 11 months when the England series starts, but Buchanan said in the Sydney Morning Herald he had not lost the respect of his opponents during his time away.

"There is no doubt that for some of our older bowlers, like Glenn and Warney, with age comes a lessening of some of the physical aspects of your game," Buchanan told the paper. "But more than out-pointing that is the experience and sense of aura guys like that bring to the team."

"Glenn has earned the respect of his opponents over time with all that he has achieved. That hasn't changed. He provides impact, defence and variety. Not many bowlers are capable of that. I think that if he is fit, he deserves a chance (to open)."

Andrew Hilditch, the new chairman of selectors, said the panel had not talked about where McGrath would bowl and was currently more concerned about monitoring the progress of his comeback. McGrath, who has spent most of the year caring for his sick wife, was named in the 30-man preliminary squad for the Champions Trophy, but there has been debate over whether the Pura Cup competition would provide better preparation for the Ashes than one-day tournaments in Malaysia and India.

"That's generally the role of the captain, deciding the bowling order, but with Glenn it's a matter of monitoring his comeback and seeing how he progresses," Hilditch told the Herald.

"When the players meet we will sit down with Glenn and discuss his comeback strategy. We haven't decided yet whether that will be through the Champions Trophy or through first-class cricket." The squad will meet in Brisbane on Tuesday before heading to a secret camp location.



Pakistan opener Imran Farhat survives while trying to cut the ball during the second day of the fourth and final Test against England at the Oval in London on Friday.

Asif to follow McGrath

CRICINFO, undated

AFP, London

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif said he hoped he could be a "big name" like Glenn McGrath after taking four wickets on his first day back in Test cricket against England here at The Oval.

The 23-year-old quick missed the first three matches of this encounter with an elbow injury as his side went a losing 2-0 down in the series.

But he was back in the groove with four for 56 in 19 overs, all top order wickets, as England were bowled out for a meagre 173 on the first day of the fourth and final Test.

Last month Pakistan vice-captain Younis Khan said Asif "looked like a young Glenn McGrath".

It was some claim given that the Australia great has taken 542 Test wickets -- the most by any fast bowler.

But Asif does bowl in similar fashion, relying on accuracy and movement as much as sheer speed although he did routinely exceed 80mph here Thursday after Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq won the toss and fielded.

"I don't know," said a modest Asif when told by reporters after stumps of Younis's comments.

"I try to be similar (to McGrath), by bowling a consistent line and

length. Every captain wants one bowler who bowls maiden overs every time and disturbs the batsman every ball."

He added: "I've watched McGrath and Jason Gillespie a lot as well as Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

"McGrath is a big name. I want to be a big name," insisted Asif, whose five previous Test appearances have seen him take 25 wickets at a miserly average of 20 apiece.

Reflecting on a day that finished with Pakistan on 96 for one, a deficit of 77 runs, with Imran Farhat 56 not out and Mohammad Yousuf 12 not out, Asif said: "We had a good day. After the injury I felt a lot of pressure early on. I just tried to bowl line and length and swing the ball early on, nothing else."

Earlier this season Asif played for English county Leicestershire where he gained a valuable local knowledge under the guidance of Tim Boon, formerly a member of England's backroom staff.

"That was a good experience. For one-and-a-half months I was with Tim Boon and he's a good coach," said Asif. "This is my first tour of England and I learned a lot about English conditions."

As well as Asif, Pakistan have also been without fellow quicks Shoaib Akhtar (ankle) and Navedul Hasan (groin) for the first three Tests of this series.

Both Akhtar and Naved are still sidelined although Asif was hopeful

the trio would be reunited for the upcoming five-match one-day series against England.

"I was really disappointed because we lost the series. Now we just try to make a good comeback in this match and then we have the one-day series left. If Shoaib, myself and Naved are fit we have a good bowling attack."

With Pakistan having lost their first Test series in England since 1982, Asif admitted he was taken aback to be playing at The Oval.

"I am surprised because we've already lost the series. But I wanted to play because, with the one-day series coming up, I wanted to be in a good rhythm and every Test is important."

But he was adamant that starting in the fielding straight away held no fears for him.

"I wanted to bowl first because every pitch, even if it's good for batting, has a little bit of moisture in it on the first day."

Meanwhile England coach Duncan Fletcher made no attempt to hide his disappointment at what was a poor all-round display by his side, now in their final Test before they begin their Ashes defence in Brisbane in November.

"We gave away a lot of soft wickets. There has been a little bit of complacency and the bowling was pretty loose up front."

WICB to back Stanford

CRICINFO, undated

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has acknowledged the success of the recently concluded Stanford 20/20 tournament and Watford look prime candidates for the drop but may yet provide a surprise. Finally look out too for Andy Johnson as the striker makes his return to the top flight for Everton.

England began a new era for themselves this Wednesday when Steve McClaren banished their most prominent fixture of the last decade and yet came out with a thumping victory. And just as McClaren's England step into an unknown future, the Premiership tour embarks on an exciting journey full of tang and charisma. The World Cup wounds may still be fresh but things could hardly be rosier.

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for the Super Star Match came to the attention of the WICB when the ICC wrote to the WICB advising its approval of the Stanford 20/20 event for 2006 only.

With West Indies scheduled to tour Pakistan in November, there are chances of the dates clashing with the 20/20 match. The representatives of the Stanford 20/20 contacted the WICB to have the dates changed. The WICB wrote to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in June to amend the dates but the Pakistan board rejected the request, stating that it had commitments with the Future Tours Programme (FTP). The presidents of both the WICB and the PCB discussed the issue during an ICC meeting in London in July, but the parties failed to reach an agreement. The WICB has now sought the help of Malcolm Speed, the ICC's chief executive, and are awaiting a reply.

"A further request for reconsideration of the dates and reopening the matter with Pakistan was sent to the CEO of ICC as recently as August 14th 2006", the release continued. "We await a reply."

"At no time did the WICB agree to the possible dates of the Super Star Match with the representatives of Stanford 20/20", a board media release stated. "The possible dates

Tigers come

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the series in Zimbabwe but I think luck was a factor in the series. Just think that previously we played against those teams for survival but now we are a far better side than them. Now one thing is settled that Kenya is no more comparable with Bangladesh," he explained.

Many questioned after the African safari whether Bangladesh top-order learned anything under the supervision of the celebrated coach as they kept making the same old mistakes.

"I agree that our top-order is still a concern for us. But I think the chilly conditions was a factor behind the poor batting. We have to have a proper plan before the ICC Champions Trophy to make sure that the batsmen will not make the mistakes again," said Mashud.

It was a memorable series for tearaway Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in either way as he came under fire after his calamitous 18-run last over in the third game against Zimbabwe and became a hero in the Kenya series.

And that was the reason the 'Narail Express' was the centre of spotlight at the airport.

"I'm still haunted by that over which actually cost the series defeat in Zimbabwe. Maybe the bad memory helped me to do better in Kenya but I am looking forward to do something in the big stage to erase the memory and it will be better if it comes in our next assignment in India where we face Zimbabwe again," said the leading paceman.

Pakistan surge ahead

CRICINFO, undated

AFP, London

Mohammad Hafeez and Mohammad Yousuf overpowered a lacklustre England attack with some fine strokeplay as they extended Pakistan's lead in the fourth and final Test at The Oval here Friday.

When bad light and rain forced an early second day tea Pakistan were 257 for two, 84 runs ahead of England's mediocre first innings 173.

Hafeez was 61 not out and Yousuf 78 not out, their stand worth 109.

Yousuf, who made 202 in the drawn first Test at Lord's and 192 in England's series-clinching 167-run third Test triumph at Headingley, once again proved a thorn in the side of the hosts' attack.

But opener Hafeez, who'd retired hurt Thursday on eight in what was his first Test since September 2003, was scarcely less assured in the face of some wayward pace bowling with spearhead Stephen Harmison well below his best.

Durham quick Harmison was entrusted with just three overs before lunch and after the break, when he dropped short and wide, was cut by Yousuf for four.

Earlier Imran Farhat's series-best 91 helped Pakistan into a first

innings lead at lunch.

Pakistan started the second session on 190 for two, 17 ahead, with Hafeez 28 not out and Yousuf 46 not out.

Yousuf went to his fifty in 93 balls with seven fours before Hafeez reached the landmark in style.

Seemingly beaten in the flight by Monty Panesar, he went through with his shot and casually drove the left-arm spinner for an 'inside out' six over extra-cover having then faced 109 balls with seven fours.

All-rounder Paul Collingwood came into the attack but, in a grim echo of what had gone before, started with a delivery wide of leg-stump.

After overnight rain delayed the start by 30 minutes, Pakistan resumed on 96 for one, 77 behind.

Farhat, dropped once, was 56 not out and Yousuf, missed twice, 12 not out after a bad day all-round for England, who at least had the consolation of having already won the series at 2-0 up.

Farhat, whose previous best this series was 34 in the second innings of Pakistan's innings and 120 run second Test defeat at Old Trafford, flamboyantly cover-drove paceman Sajid Mahmood for four.

And the left-hander then hit the Lancashire quick on the top of the bounce for a stylish square-driven boundary.

Mahmood was replaced by

Panesar. But his first ball was hit for six as Farhat advanced down the pitch and drove him high over long-on.

Farhat, on 87, failed to control a cut off Hoggard and the ball flew over the head of England captain Andrew Strauss at second slip for four.

But two balls later Farhat, in sight of his third Test hundred, saw his luck run out when he edged Hoggard straight to Marcus Trescothick at first slip after a stand of 78 when Yousuf had taken Pakistan to 148 for two.

Farhat faced 112 balls with one six and 13 fours.

On Thursday fast bowler Mohammad Asif, who missed the first three Tests of the series with an elbow injury, showed what Pakistan had been missing by taking four for 56, including a spell of three top-order wickets for four runs in 11 balls.

England compounded their poor batting display by dropping three chances in five Hoggard balls.

Farhat, on 49, saw a leaping Collingwood fail to hold a tough chance in the covers off a fierce drive.

Next ball Yousuf, on five, was dropped by Trescothick and on nine he was missed in the gully by Alastair Cook.

Up until this match Pakistan had been without all three of their lead-

ing quicks in Shoaib Akhtar (ankle), Rana Naved (groin) and Asif, a major handicap as they lost their first Test series in England since 1982.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the second day of the fourth and final Test between England and Pakistan at The Oval on Friday:

ENGLAND: First innings 173 (Gul 4-47, Asif 4-56)

PAKISTAN: First innings (overnight 96-1)

Hafeez not out	61
Farhat c Trescothick b Hoggard	91
Younis c Read b Mahmood	9
Yousuf not out	78
Extras: (lb-7, w-6, nb-5)	18
Total: (For 2 wkts in 63.3 overs)	257

Fall of wickets: 1-70, 2-148

To bat: Inzamamul Haq, Faisal Iqbal, Kamran Akmal, Shahid Nazir, Mohammad Asif, Umar Gul, Danish Kaneria

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	17	2	66	1
Harmison	13.3	2	67	0
Mahmood	15	2	59	1
Panesar	16	3	52	0
Collingwood	2	0	6	0

Booters' time

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"Even (Diego) Maradona, the best player in the world, practised shooting for one hour after team practice. If a footballer of his calibre did this, our players need harder work."

Not worried about the defence which has turned into his strongest point in the tournament, he said that the defence remains under pressure when the midfield loses the ball.

"Apart from Arman Aziz, I haven't found any midfielder or a striker backing up the defenders. During training at BKSP, the players looked better. Under pressure in a match, they tend to show their nerves. Against India, I am going to field the players who are mentally strong, mostly the seniors.

"I have seen India's matches and found that Afghanistan played better than them. Nepal were also more attacking than India. I think we can beat India. If we create chances and lose them all, we can't be the champions in this tournament."

Kuznetsova, at No. 4 the highest seed left in the draw, advanced to the quarters with a 6-2, 7-6 victory over Ai Sugiyama of Japan.

The Russian, who is playing in her first event since losing in the third round at Wimbledon, will take on the seventh-seeded Hingis in the biggest-name match-up of the tournament has left to offer.

Hingis dispatched 11th-seeded Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia 7-5, 6-4.

But by the time they took the court for the night match, fifth-seeded Czech starlet Nicole Pietrangeli and Serbian Jelena Jankovic had already become the latest injury casualties.

Vaidisova withdrew prior to her match against Nicole Pratt of Australia due to right shoulder

Hingis advances

CRICINFO, undated

AFP, Montreal

Former US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova booked a quarterfinal clash with former world No. 1 Martina Hingis here Thursday at the injury-hit 1.34 million-dollar WTA tournament.

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Vaidisova withdrew prior to her match against Nicole Pratt of Australia due to right shoulder

tendinitis.

The Czech teen was looking to reach the quarterfinals for the third time in as many starts. She lost to Kim Clijsters in the semi-finals at both Stanford and San Diego in recent weeks.

"This morning I hit some balls and it still felt a little sore. The timing is bad with the US Open coming up," said Vaidisova, who withdrew hours before the scheduled start of the match rather than risk a serious injury before the last Grand Slam of the season.

Her withdrawal was swiftly followed by that of Jankovic.

Jankovic, who lost in the final in Los Angeles to Russian Elena Dementieva on Sunday, also complained of right shoulder tendinitis.

She had received on-court treatment for heat illness in her loss to Dementieva in Los Angeles, and admitted her run to the title match there had left her weary.

Vaidisova's pullout gave Australian Nicole Pratt a walkover win. Pratt will meet ninth-seeded Russian Dinara Safina, who beat Shenay Perry 7-5, 6-3.

Jankovic's departure gave compatriot Ana Ivanovic a walkover

win, putting her into a quarterfinal against Slovenian Katarina Srebotnik.

Srebotnik dispatched Canadian wild card Stephanie Dubois 6-3, 6-2. Dubois had benefited on Wednesday night when top-seeded Clijsters retired while up a set with a left wrist injury.

Clijsters, who missed much of the 2004 season with an injury to the same wrist, said it was hurting throughout the match, and got worse when she broke a fall with her hands in the second set.

According to a statement on her website, the Belgian is set to miss out on defending her US Open title.

"Kim won't be able to play tennis in the next few weeks," the statement said.

The remaining semi-final will pit Russian Anna Chakvetadze against Israel's Shahar Peer.

Chakvetadze, the 19-year-old who ousted third-seeded compatriot Nadia Petrova in the second round, beat France's Nathalie Dechy 6-1, 6-4.

Peer beat France's Marion Bartoli 2-6, 7-5, 6-4.

SA to host Zim

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September.

The website Supercricket.com reported that Mickey Arthur, the South African coach, is set to request additional matches to compensate for the cancellation of the tri-series.

The matches will be the only preparation for both sides ahead of October's Champions Trophy in India. The Twenty20 match, against the Eagles, will be played on September 13 at Kimberly, followed by the one-day internationals at Bloemfontein and East London.

Dollar expensive

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Usman also fell soon after to Nazmul via a leg-before decision.

But the home side's innings was revived as opener Nasir and Fawwad shared an unbeaten 122-run third wicket stand. Nasir was not out on 89 while Fawwad remained at the crease on 47.

Foreign flavour

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The Mancunian Blues also look capable. Hatem Trabelsi continued the trend of fine foreign players as he made the switch from Holland. The Tunisian captain a solid fixture at right back will link up with Dietmar Hamann and Joey Barton. Darius Vassell will look to provide the goals for City.

Aston Villa, on the verge of a takeover and with Martin O'Neill installed as manager, and Blackburn can also make their mark, however subtle. David Bentley for the latter and Milan Baros for the former, men to watch out for.

As for the new boys, Reading make it into the Premier League for the first time in their history on the back of a record breaking season in the Championship. Look out for American winger Bobby Convey and Seol-ki-Hyeon. Sheffield United led my midfielder Phil Jagielka and Watford look prime candidates for the drop but may yet provide a surprise. Finally look out too for Andy Johnson as the striker makes his return to the top flight for Everton.

England began a new era for themselves this Wednesday when Steve McClaren banished their most prominent fixture of the last decade and yet came out with a thumping victory. And just as McClaren's England step into an unknown future, the Premiership tour embarks on an exciting journey full of tang and charisma. The World Cup wounds may still be fresh but things could hardly be rosier.

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CRICINFO, undated

AFP, Cincinnati

Andy Murray followed up his landmark victory over Roger Federer by beating Robby Ginepri in a three-set thriller that put the Scot in the quarterfinals of the Cincinnati Masters on Thursday.

A weary Murray managed to break the aching American in the closing moments to complete a 7-6, 2-6, 6-4 victory in just over two hours.

The triumph came a day after the biggest win of the 19-year-old's career, a second-round upset of world No. 1 Federer.

It looked briefly as if Murray wouldn't be able to build on that achievement, as faded to lose the second set and went down a break

in the third against 2005 US Open semi-finalist Ginepri.

But Murray found strength to fight on, and secured the match as he broke the flagging Ginepri in the final game.

Both men could barely stand at the conclusion.

"When you're tired and you know there are only two or three games to go, you just fight for it," said Murray, who has played 13 matches over 16 days.

"That keeps you going. I was struggling at the end, but I had to keep believing. I was able to break him -- not because of my good play but because of his errors."

The Briton added: "In the third set, I didn't feel like I would win it. It was tough to get back in, my legs were burning after each point. It was the first time I've felt like that on court."



British youngster Andy Murray covers a tight ball during his third round match against American Robby Ginepri at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Cincinnati on Thursday.

"It was more humid and the court felt like it was burning under my feet. At the end I was not thinking, I was just trying to get the ball onto the court."

Murray will face off Friday night against 2005 finalist Andy Roddick. The ninth-seeded American defeated Argentina's Juan Ignacio Chela 6-3, 6-4.

Second seed Rafael Nadal, who is the only man besides Murray with a win over Federer this year, boosted his hardcourt confidence by a huge factor with a 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 victory over German Tommy Haas.

Nadal stepped up to serve for victory against the 14th-seeded Haas, the champion in Los Angeles last month, having lost just two points on serve in the second set.

The 20-year-old two-time Roland Garros champion got out of a brief jam as he saved a break point, with Haas sealing his own fate with a weak drop shot effort on a match point for Nadal.

It took less than two hours for Nadal to advance on the back of 27 winners and 18 unforced errors into a clash with senior Spanish compatriot Juan Carlos Ferrero, a former US Open finalist.

"I'm happy for this win today, I feel a lot better about my game," said Nadal, winner of five titles this season. "I was playing badly last week, but today I improved a lot."

"This was a good test for the US Open," he added. "I had some doubts, but now I don't."

Nadal is looking for his first trophy since winning the French Open in June over Federer. His hard court season began badly last week in Toronto as he lost in the third round to Czech Tomas Berdych.

In the quarter-finals he'll face compatriot Juan Carlos Ferrero, who beat Sweden's Robin Soderling 7-5, 6-4.

Fourth seeded Croatian Ivan Ljubicic fired 10 aces in his 1hr, 45min victory over 16th-seeded Dominik Hrbaty.

Ljubicic soared to his sixth victory in the series against two defeats at the hands of the Slovak, ending Hrbaty's run of wins in their previous two meetings.

The Croatian improved his record-setting season to 49 wins, 13 defeats, including titles in Chennai and Zagreb.