

CA studies home ODIs

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia said Thursday it was unable to guarantee the format of the home triangular one-day international series would be retained beyond the 2007-08 summer season.

This season's annual tri-series involves Australia, England and New Zealand, but the tournament format has been criticised for being too long and suffers in popularity when the home side is not involved in the finals.

There have been suggestions that Australia play both touring nations in separate one-day series, spread either side of the domestic Test matches.

Cricket Australia (CA) chief executive James Sutherland said the organisation was assessing the format of the one-day series in conjunction with talks with broadcaster Channel Nine, and studying attendance figures.

Sutherland was unable to say whether the same triangular format, a staple of Australian summers since the late Kerry Packer introduced the concept in 1979-80, would be kept for the 2008-09 season.

CA is locked in to host a tri-series in 2007-08, meaning the earliest a change could be made would be for the 2008-09 season.

India and Sri Lanka are scheduled to tour Australia in 2007-08, and the matches between those sides will reap the CA millions of dollars in broadcast rights from the cricket-infatuated continent.

"What we've said before is that we continue to look at ways in which our traditional program -- and not just one-day international cricket but Test cricket and Twenty-20 cricket -- can evolve and change so we can satisfy our customers' needs," Sutherland told reporters Thursday.

"That's what really is important to us, that cricket fans continue to get content in the appropriate format."

"In terms of how that might look in the future, who knows?"

This (southern) summer's series starts with Australia playing England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on January 12, after the five-Test Ashes series.

Punter firm

FROM PAGE 21

necessarily right. But that is the way everyone wants to play."

Stephen Fleming, though, didn't think there could be any sort of agreement on the issue, preferring to take it in a situation-based manner. "I don't think players can really tell when they've taken it or not so it's better to handle it depending on the situation. It's really a player v player thing and I thought it was handled well today (Wednesday)."

Real steal

FROM PAGE 24

had bought tickets.

And they were soon snapping at their aristocratic hosts, Ovidiu Petre earning a booking for a foul on Guti.

Ivan Helguera had a chance to break the deadlock on 25 minutes but his header after good work by Roberto Carlos was off target.

Stelian Stancu set up Nicolita in the dying embers of the opening period but the latter had strayed offside as the visitors refused to be overawed, even after Nicolita's tragi-comic moment which sealed matters.

Ancelotti heaps

FROM PAGE 24

"With Kaka in this kind of form, I'm looking forward to seeing who they award the Golden Ball to."

The Golden Ball is the annual prize awarded to the best player in the European leagues.

"Certainly, I would like to win it very much, but I can only do my duty, then hope that I'm rewarded for the results," Kaka said.

"For now, though, I want to play as well as I can for Milan and my national team."

"I don't feel that I've fulfilled my potential yet. There's always something I can improve on."

United caught

FROM PAGE 24

Swung in from the right, the ball fell beyond the back post to Michael Gravgaard whose return cross was headed towards goal by Hutchison and then stabbed over the line by Allback.

Christiansen had to make one more good stop to deny Ronaldo but the Danes held out for a win that keeps alive their chance of making a first appearance in the knockout stages of the competition.

Solbakken said he was proud of his men.

"My players ran and fought as much as they did for the whole game. Some of them could barely walk in the last ten minutes but still we managed to keep it tight after we scored."

"But of course we must admit they had more chances than us and we rode our luck a little bit but it is a good feeling for the lads."



Zimbabwe cricket players look at the burned down Zimbabwe Cricket Academy in Harare on Thursday after it was destroyed by a suspected arson attack the day before.

Vermeulen the attacker?

Cricket

AFP, Harare

Police were questioning controversial former Zimbabwe Test player Mark Vermeulen on Thursday over a suspected arson attack on the national cricket training academy in Harare.

The pavilion and computer equipment as well as kit were destroyed by the blaze on Tuesday night at the training centre, a day after a suspicious fire at Zimbabwe Cricket's (ZC) boardroom at the Harare Sports Club which caused minor damage.

"He's been detained since yesterday (Wednesday) on charges of arson," Vermeulen's father Roland told AFP.

"We don't know at the moment where they are holding him ... but we are trying our best to get him out and sort matters while he is outside."

"Police cells are not the best place to be."

Harare police spokesman Andrew Phiri confirmed Vermeulen's arrest.

"He is a suspect in connection with the arson attack at the cricket academy," he told AFP.

The police have also seized a family car which Vermeulen is alleged to have driven to the academy, said his father.

The 27-year-old Vermeulen, who played the last of his eight Tests in 2004, recently returned to Zimbabwe after a stint playing league cricket in England where he was slapped with a lengthy ban for throwing a ball at spectators.

He was also sent home from the 2003 tour of England after a string of run-ins with the management, including a refusal to travel with the rest of the team after he was twice out for a duck in the same Test match.

Vermeulen was badly injured on a tour of Australia two years ago

when he was struck in the head from a ball and has since been reportedly diagnosed with a depressive illness.

Since his return from England, the right-handed batsman has spoken of his desire to win back his place in the national side.

The incident is the latest blow to Zimbabwe cricket which has been rocked by a string of crises since co-hosting the 2003 World Cup with South Africa and Kenya.

Henry Olonga, Zimbabwe's first black international cricketer, and his white compatriot Andy Flower, the country's leading batsman, took to the field for a match during the tournament wearing black armbands "to mourn the death of democracy" in Zimbabwe.

Since then, the team have lost their Test match status while other top players such as captain Heath Streak have quit the team.

Matthew likens Monty to Daniel

PTI, Melbourne

Australian Test opener Matthew Hayden has described England's Monty Panesar "different" from most finger spinners but said his wicket-taking ability was quite like that of New Zealand left-arm ace Daniel Vettori.

"He's a little bit different to most finger spinners. He does give the ball good air and he flights the ball. It's very Daniel Vettori, the other hand round," Hayden said.

The Queensland batsman said Panesar, the first Sikh to play for England, would be a challenge during the upcoming Ashes but the presence of himself, Justin Langer, Mike Hussey and Adam Gilchrist at the top would blunt his prowess.

"The way that we play spin is obviously super aggressive, so I think he will be challenged. That gives him an opportunity as well. So it's a two-way street," he was quoted as saying by the 'Courier Mail'.

"We are going to definitely put him under pressure, but he is going to take wickets as well," said Hayden, who just returned from a broken finger.

Glenn claims

FROM PAGE 21

"We have been very excited about our chances this time around," Ponting added.

"To be in a final is one step further than we have ever been so we will give ourselves a good chance when we get to Mumbai."

Intikhab sets

FROM PAGE 21

The sanctions are effective from Oct. 15, although Shoaib and Asif, who have both denied knowingly using banned substances, can appeal.

Explaining the different length of punishments given to the players, Alam said: "Shoaib has been around for the last 10 years and the written statement that his spokesman gave about him taking dietary supplements and not consulting a doctor, shows he was negligent."

He said the tribunal had been more lenient with Asif because his English was not that good and he comes from a remote village where he would not have been educated on the dangers of drugs in sport.

Inzy can feel their pain

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq said Thursday he felt the pain of bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif after they were banned for doping, adding that the team would badly miss their pace.

"I can understand how the two were feeling and I am hurt myself over the incidents," said Inzamam -- who is himself banned for four one-dayers for bringing the game into disrepute at the Oval Test in August.

A Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) tribunal on Wednesday banned Akhtar for two years and Asif for 12 months after they tested positive for the prohibited steroid nandrolone, a performance-enhancing drug.

The doping scandal was the latest in a series of woes to befall Pakistan cricket.

"Their absence will make a difference in our performance. Asif's career had just taken off and both he and Akhtar were our main wicket-takers," added Inzamam.

The veteran skipper said he was confident both players would appeal their bans, which threaten to dent Pakistan's bid for the 2007 World Cup. Akhtar's ban threatens the 31-year-old's career.

But he added that their absence would be felt much sooner than that.

"Even our series against the West Indies will become tough without them," said Inzamam, referring to Pakistan's three-match Test and five-match one-day international home series starting later this month.

Burly Inzamam will miss the first of the one-dayers as he completes the ban imposed last month by the International Cricket Council (ICC) following the fiasco at the Oval.

The master batsman led Pakistan's refusal to return to the field on the fourth day of the fourth Test against England at the historic ground after they were penalised five runs for alleged ball-tampering.

The ICC cleared him of altering the condition of the ball but found him guilty of bringing the game into disrepute.

Pakistan were also been hit by Younis Khan's short-lived resignation of the captaincy ahead of the Champions Trophy in India and by upheaval in the boardroom that brought in a new PCB chairman and other staff.

Nikolay into last eight

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Defending champion Tomas Berdych and Nikolay Davydenko, the highest ranked player in the tournament, wasted little time in reaching the Paris Masters quarterfinals on Thursday.

Berdych, the eighth-seeded Czech, cruised past America's Robby Ginepri 6-3, 6-3 in just 65 minutes while Davydenko, the Russian fourth seed, took just six minutes longer to reach the last eight with a 6-2, 6-2 win over compatriot Dmitry Tursunov.

Their no-nonsense, express trip to the next stage was in stark contrast to Wednesday's action at the Bercy arena when the day's programme did not end until 0100 on Thursday morning.

Davydenko's impressive win should also have guaranteed him a place in the Davis Cup final.

He had been edged out of the singles line-up by the America-based Tursunov in the semifinal victory over the United States.

But his run to a second consecutive last eight place here should see him line up alongside Marat

Safin for this year's final against Argentina in Moscow in December.

Davydenko will now face either Croatian ninth seed Mario Ancic or unseeded Frenchman Julien Benneteau for a place in the semifinals.

"It's not difficult to play against a Davis Cup colleague because this is singles and that is the consideration," said the 25-year-old Russian who is chasing his fifth title of 2006.

In two matches so far here, he has dropped just four games and has spent less than two hours on court.

Later Thursday the fight to grab the three remaining places at the season-ending Masters Cup in Shanghai continues.

Spanish sixth seed Tommy Robredo faces France's Paul-Henri Mathieu while James Blake, the American seventh seed, takes on German 10th seed Tommy Haas.

Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Ivan Ljubicic, Andy Roddick, who are not playing this week, and Davydenko have already made sure of their places in the China event which starts on November 12.

Argentina's David Nalbandian, currently sitting sixth in the race to grab one of the places in the

eight-man field, is sitting out Paris with a stomach injury.

Flemo talks

FROM PAGE 21

"But Australia are in the situation now where they've got most of their players to pick from and are looking at how to maintain that fitness over the next few months. If they do that, they will win the Ashes."

Fleming cited the Australian team's willingness to dissect the problems that dogged their Ashes campaign last year and the team "boot camp" in Queensland in August as signs Australia were hell-bent on reversing last year's result.

"Australia have obviously done a lot of thinking about what went wrong in England," Fleming said.

"That's got to make them stronger. They've used some different ways of getting together, going up the mountain (in Queensland) was one, so they are obviously very aware of how important the series is."

"That's always a dangerous thing to have, when an Australian side is smart about an upcoming series."

Gayle takes WI into final

FROM PAGE 21

team had elected to bat. He added 92 for the fourth wicket with AB de Villiers (46) after South Africa had lost skipper Graeme Smith (19), Loots Bosman (39) and Jacques Kallis (16).

South Africa were steadied by Gibbs, playing his first tournament in India after being named in the 2000 match-fixing scandal. He had already skipped two tours to the country.

Gibbs adjusted himself remarkably well on a slow pitch, picking the right deliveries to punish during his 26th half-century. He struck one six and four boundaries before falling in the last over.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Champions Trophy second semifinal between South Africa and the West Indies at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium on Thursday:

SOUTH AFRICA	
Smith b Taylor	19
Bosman c Gayle b Samuels	39
Kallis c Sarwan b Bravo	16
Gibbs c Lara b Bravo	77
De Villiers run out	46
Kemp b Bradshaw	3
Boucher c Sarwan b Samuels	16
Pollock b Taylor	4
Peterson not out	15
Nel not out	0
Extras: (b-1, lb-6, nb-1, w-15)	23

Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs) 258
Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-65, 3-96, 4-188, 5-195, 6-219, 7-227, 8-256

Did not bat: Ntini				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Bradshaw	10	0	58	1
Taylor	10	1	48	2
Bravo	7	0	41	2
Smith	4	1	12	0
Gayle	10	0	48	0
Samuels	9	0	44	2

WEST INDIES				
Gayle not out	133			
Chanderpaul ret'd hurt	57			
Sarwan lbw b Ntini	27			
Bravo run out	15			
Lara c and b Smith	9			
Morton c de Villiers b Peterson	0			
Samuels not out	5			
Extras: (lb-7, nb-3, w-6)	16			

Total: (For 4 wkts in 44 overs) 262
Fall of wickets: 1-196, 2-226, 3-243, 4-244

Did not bat: Smith, Baugh, Bradshaw, Taylor

Bowler				
Pollock	5	0	34	0
Ntini	7	0	49	1
Nel	10	1	60	0
Smith	10	0	43	1
Kallis	5	0	33	0
Peterson	7	0	36	1

Result: West Indies win by six wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Chris Gayle.
Toss: South Africa.
Umpires: Simon Taufel and Aleem Dar.

Akhtar, Asif to appeal

FROM PAGE 21

substances or WADA's Athlete Guide which PCB officials said were given to players prior to the England tour in August 2006.

The report defended the lighter ban on Asif because he was a "relative newcomer" who had never been tested previously and that there was some doubt that he had ever been given the list of banned drugs.

Physio Lifson said Asif had stopped using a vitamin supplement bought locally "as soon as he was told to do so", adding that Asif also had little understanding of English.

The pair now have the right to appeal.

Meanwhile, Asif is also likely to appeal against his ban.

Asif confirmed to Cricinfo that he will appeal against the decision to ban him for a year and said that he couldn't explain the presence of nandrolone in

his urine sample. "I will appeal against this. I don't know how this has happened. I wasn't even aware of the dope test and I was the one who gave it first."

The tribunal's verdict revealed that Asif had been using a protein supplement, Promax-50, but stopped using it as soon as he was told to do so by Lifson. It is thought possible that this was the cause of the positive sample. "Obviously I am very disappointed about what has happened. I had no idea."

The case of Asif's ignorance may be strengthened in light of the tribunal's finding that the board has not played a satisfactory role in ensuring that its players are suitably cautioned and advised about such issues.

The PCB has stated that a new tribunal will be set up in case the players appeal, as seems likely now.

Imran terms ban

FROM PAGE 21

delivery ever recorded in 2003.

"Akhtar will find it very difficult to stage a comeback and two years will make a lot of difference to his bowling," said Miandad, who was replaced as coach by English-born Bob Woolmer in 2004.

"But Asif is young and he can stage a comeback," added Miandad.

Miandad urged the PCB to come up with a plan B for the World Cup in 2007 in the West Indies.

"We need to have an emergency plan for the World Cup if we want good results," said Miandad, who was Pakistan's best batsman in the 1992 World Cup.

Akhtar's former teammate and captain from 2003-2004, Rashid Latif, asked why the two bowlers were handed different bans for the same offence.

"It's harsh to ban Akhtar for two years and I can't say the tribunal's decision is impartial. It is an attempt to end Akhtar's career," said Latif.

"When a penalty is imposed it should be equal for both offenders."

Popular all-rounder Shahid Afridi, a teammate of the banned pair in the current Pakistan set-up, described the ban as disappointing.

"We will definitely miss both Asif and Akhtar in the World Cup and Asif's confidence will be hurt by this penalty. It is disappointing to hear the news," said Afridi.

However former Pakistan pacer Jalaluddin, who recorded the first-ever hat-trick in one-day cricket history in 1982, defended the bans.

"The PCB was under pressure to take a strict decision or else the outside world would have criticised. I think players should appeal and get some relaxation," said Jalal.

Newspapers in this cricket-obsessed nation of 150 million people splashed the scandal across their front pages Thursday, a day after it wiped all other stories off private television news channels.

"Dope-tainted Asif and Akhtar banned," screamed a headline in the premier English daily Dawn.

"Doping ban bowls out Shoaib, Asif," said the Nation.

The paper further added: "This indeed is a sad day in Pakistan cricket."

Juve celebrate

FROM PAGE 24

points, three behind leaders Genoa, after nine matches played.

Michel Platini, who became a Juventus legend after a hugely successful five-year stay with the Turin giants between 1982 and 1987, was one of several former players invited to kick-start the club's anniversary celebrations before the match.

The three-time European Footballer of the Year admitted to feeling emotional, particularly as Brescia were Juve's opponents in his final game for Juventus.

"This is something exceptional for me, a beautiful, moving experience," said the 51-year-old former France captain, who was top scorer in Serie A for three consecutive seasons from the 1982-83 campaign and helped Juve win two league titles and the European Cup.

"I played against Brescia in my last game for Juventus, so this brings back many happy memories."

Another guest was former Juve and Italy defender Gianluca Pessotto, who suffered multiple injuries after a heavy fall in an apparent suicide attempt earlier this year.

Juventus, founded on November 1, 1897, were gifted an early breakthrough.

Del Piero, in his 14th season with the club, fired a freekick towards the Brescia goal and keeper Emiliano Viviano allowed the ball to slip through his fingers and into the net.

Brescia fell further behind in the 22nd minute when Del Piero's cross struck Colombo's raised arm and flashed past Viviano's outstretched hand.