

## Warne rides into sunset

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Test cricket's greatest bowler Shane Warne announced his retirement from international cricket on Thursday, drawing the curtain on one of the most celebrated careers in the sport's history.

Saying he wanted to go out on top, the 37-year-old Australian leg-spinner with a world record 699 Test wickets revealed the two remaining Ashes Tests against England will be his last international matches.

"It's been unbelievable -- my ride in international cricket's been phenomenal," an upbeat Warne told a packed media conference at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Warne said he had also retired from Australian domestic cricket but will see out the remaining two years of his contract with English county side Hampshire.

Fast bowler Glenn McGrath is also tipped to announce his retirement soon, while batsmen Damien Martyn quit suddenly just before the third Ashes Test.

Warne said he had considered retiring after the 2005 Ashes but decided to press on after Australia's shock loss to England set him on "a mission to get that urn back".

The goal was accomplished in emphatic fashion last week when Australia took an unassailable 3-0 lead in the series and Warne said he could now retire happy, even though his remarkable bowling prowess remains intact.

He broke the news to captain Ricky Ponting as the team celebrated its Ashes victory in Perth.

"While the team's successful I think it's a good time to go out on top," Warne said, declaring "now is my time" and saying he could not imagine reversing the decision.

Warne's Test record and larger-than-life personality have already assured his status as a legend in the game.

The Sydney Daily Telegraph declared Warne's departure as the "End of an era" and the Australian newspaper hailed him as cricket's best ever bowler.

Warne was pleased to have the chance to take his 700th Test wicket before his adoring home crowd here and then finish his career in Sydney, where he made his debut against India in January 1992.

"I don't think I could have written the script any better," he told the nationally televised press conference.

Warne -- almost as well-known for his off-pitch antics including a series of sex scandals, a positive drugs test and bookmaking controversies -- said he was looking forward to time away from the

spotlight.

"I suppose there's always going to be attention on what I'm doing in my personal life, off-field ... hopefully it won't be to the same level, the same scrutiny, the same intensity, the same judgemental, moralistic sort of stuff," he said.

The scandals led to Warne being stripped of the vice-captaincy in 2000 and probably prevented him from becoming Australian skipper, but he said he had no regrets.

"I've given everything I possibly could to the cause, and that was winning. Cricket to me is my hobby, my passion and I love doing it. Yeah, I'll probably miss it ... I've missed one-day cricket in the last few years."

Warne said he felt privileged to have played in a champion Australian side and felt he had given something to the game's fans.

"People have turned up, I like to think that I've given them entertainment and I've tried my guts out every single time," he said.

Warne said he would like to be remembered as someone who "gave it everything he possibly could, he had fun along the way, he was an entertainer and people liked watching me, I suppose".

Warne, whose attacking flair revolutionised spin bowling, also stressed the importance his fighting qualities played in his game.

"I've never walked away from an issue -- I'm knackered, I'm tired, I can't move -- I've still been able to turn up and play," he said. "I've given absolutely everything to the game."

He said he did not yet have any post-retirement plans, except to spend more time with his children, amid reports he will take a commentator's job with Australia's Channel Nine.

"I don't know what the future holds, I don't know what I'm going to be doing," he said, adding however that he had "some ideas".

He said he would work with Cricket Australia to forge a role in the sport in his home country.

"I love Australian cricket... and I'll do whatever it is to keep Australian cricket at the top," he said.

He laughed off a suggestion from his former captain Steve Waugh that he could eventually coach bitter rivals England, a side he has haunted and humiliated as a bowler.

"I don't know what Stephen's on," he said.

On his immediate future, Warne said: "My focus is these next two Test matches and after that I'll sit back and have a few quiet beers and few smokes and try and weigh it all up and see what the future holds."



Australian legspin legend Shane Warne announces his retirement from international cricket during a press conference at the Melbourne Cricket Ground dining-hall on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP



### Did U Know?

Muttiah Muralidaran of Sri Lanka took 4 for 31 in the first innings and 6 for 74 in the second innings of the second Test against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve on December 13. It was the nineteenth time that he has taken ten wickets or more in a match, first against New Zealand.



**Paul Collingwood** (England batsman)  
"In cricketing terms he is the ultimate legend. He's probably the best bowler there has ever been on this planet."  
On Shane Warne.

### What to WATCH

**STAR Sports**  
New Zealand v Sri Lanka  
First Twenty20 Int'l  
Live at 12:00 pm  
**ESPN**  
Sportscenter India  
Live at 8:30 pm

### Dhaka-BKSP in Nat'l Cricket final

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
Dhaka and sports institute BKSP reached the final of the National Cricket Championship with big wins in their semifinal encounters at the BKSP grounds yesterday.  
It was an all-Mohammadpur show as Maruf Sunny scored 60 while fellow all-rounder Sharifullah struck 40 before taking two wickets, giving Dhaka a huge 107-run win over Nilphamari.

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## Sachin salutes Shane

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sachin Tendulkar, one of the few to have played the game even longer than Shane Warne, paid tribute to his old sparring partner after Warne announced that he would retire at the end of the current Ashes series.

Tendulkar and Warne enjoyed some memorable contests, with Warne once admitting that Tendulkar's batting -- especially in the series in India in 1998 -- gave him nightmares.

"I really don't know what was going on in his mind but he knows better than anyone else," said Tendulkar, when the media asked him for a reaction as the Indian team limbered up for the second

Test at Kingsmead.

"I'd much rather look at what he's achieved. He's been a great ambassador for cricket, and Australia. He's a good friend of mine and it's unfortunate that he's retiring. We'll all miss his quality bowling. It's been a treat to watch."

According to Tendulkar, Warne would always command a special place in the game's annals. "He's surely one of the greatest players to have played this game," he said.

"Above all, I think he's a wonderful person. He's a good friend and what he's been able to achieve for Australia is something special. There are not many guys who can stand next to him and say that they have done similar things. You don't get to see such cricketers every day."

While most rate Warne as the greatest slow bowler of his or any

other era, Tendulkar preferred to think of him as one part of a triumvirate that rejuvenated spin bowling after some lean years in the 1980s.

"He's certainly been one of the top spinners," said Tendulkar. "Another great spinner is playing in my team, Anil Kumble, and then there's Muralidaran. These three spinners are the best, and anyone would want to have them in the side."

For years, his tussles with Warne were among the game's marquee contests, and Tendulkar said that there would be several great memories.

"We've always had good competition, and shared some nice humour. I remember the first time I scored a hundred against him in one-day cricket, in Sri Lanka. I hit

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## New ball for Twenty20

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

A better quality ball will be used in the second round matches of the Twenty20 version of the Premier Cricket League, which resumes today after a day's break due to the countrywide hartal.

After the teams' complaints following Wednesday's opening round, the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) has decided to use Pakistani CA Test Star balls instead of the Kimati brand made in India.

"We received complaints from the teams and Roquibul Hassan, our match referee in the matches held at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, told us that the ball is not

appropriate for top level cricket," said CCDM chairman Khondokar Jamiluddin yesterday.

"The Test Star is a much better ball than the previous one and national cricketer Khaled Mashud and the board's senior coach Imran Sarwar both have endorsed it. One of the clubs is also training with this brand, so we have decided to change it."

Jamil said that the seam was too hard and pose injury risks to the cricketers but still, he was annoyed about the incident.

"The same ball (Kimati) was used during the Corporate League but no one complained. Suddenly every one is against it. There must be something, so we might investigate the matter," he said without confirming whether a probe body would be formed to find out how

such a poor-quality product has been supplied.

"Whatever, I prefer to avoid controversies and would have used the Kookaburra ball but our stock is not adequate. We will use Kookaburra in the semifinals and the final and all the Premier League (50-over competition) games to be played with the white ball."

Not only the ball had been changed thrice inside 20 overs of the first match at Dhanmondi on Wednesday but also, the bumpy ground itself was a concern.

Two cricketers were injured during fielding and the players keep suffering at the inferior dressing rooms.

"I admit the good cricket is not possible in a ground like this. But if the ground cannot be protected

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The wax statue of Ronaldinho is unveiled by Dutch footballer Frank de Boer (L) at the Tussauds in Amsterdam on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Nat'l Sports Award announced

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The government yesterday announced the ten winners of the National Sports Award for 2006.

The list includes former national footballers -- incidentally both wingers -- Hasanuzzaman Babloo, now a national coach, and Wasim Iqbal apart from country's leading wicket-taker in international cricket Mohammad Rafique.

South Asian Games gold medalist shooter Sharmin Akhter has also been nominated for the award.

The others are: Ehtesham Sultan (hockey), Fouzia Huda Jui (athletics), Mahmuda Sharif (swimming), Azad Abul Kalam (bodybuilding and weightlifting), Nayana Chowdhury (judo) and Lt Col (ret) MA Hamid (organiser).

## Zimbabwe tour on

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will tour Zimbabwe in February 2007 for a one-day international series but on their own conditions, mentioned Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) general secretary Mahub Anam.

Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) had invited Bangladesh to play a five-match series as preparation for next year's World Cup in the West Indies but the board, which agreed to make the tour, proposed for a four-match series.

"We have agreed to tour but we want to make the trip as short as possible and play not more than four matches. Our proposal is a tour from February 1-11," Mahub told the Daily Star last night.

The tour was originally proposed for January but BCB wanted a change in the schedule as it clashes with the domestic league.

"We also want to give the cricketers more time to rest before leaving for the Caribbean. We have yet to receive the confirmation but we're expected to get the answer from the ZC very soon," he added.

## Ronaldinho seeks to be a Spaniard

Cricket

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona's Brazilian international striker Ronaldinho has applied for Spanish citizenship, which he could obtain early in 2007, a spokesman for the Catalan club confirmed Thursday.

According to Catalunya Radio, the two-time world player of the year, presented the necessary documents himself before a court in Gava, in the Barcelona suburbs, on Wednesday.

"The process was started a long time ago and the player is handling the details himself," a Barcelona club spokesman said.

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## The Hollywood

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Throughout his career, only Shane Warne's sublime on-field performances have generated more headlines than his tempestuous life away from the cricket pitch.

By retiring at the height of his powers, the 37-year-old leg-spinner

who announced his departure from international and Australian cricket Thursday has cemented his reputation as the greatest bowler ever to play the game.

Already, Warne has been acclaimed as the second best sportsman in Australia's history, behind only legendary batsman Don Bradman, one of his heroes.

"People have turned up and I like to think that I've given them enter-

tainment and I've tried my guts out every single time," he said, announcing his retirement.

The spinner they call Hollywood has taken more Test wickets than any other bowler, skitting 699 batsmen in 143 Tests at an average of 25.49 since his debut against India in January 1992.

But the statistics tell only part of the story. The cigarette-puffing, beer-swilling Warne revived the long-dormant art of leg-spin bowling with his amazing ability to turn the ball and intimidate the opposition.

His former national captain Steve Waugh said he knew there was something special about the chubby young bowler from suburban Melbourne when he first saw him bowl on an Australian youth tour to Zimbabwe in 1991.

"I could hear the ball fizzing down the wicket," he said of the unlikely prodigy sporting spiky blond hair.

"It's something I've never heard before or since from another bowler, it was just the revolutions and energy he was putting on the ball."

Warne posted inauspicious figures of 1-150 in his 1992 Test debut but knuckled down under his mentor Terry Jenner and 18 months later caught the cricketing world's attention with the "ball of the century" against England.

The delivery, Warne's first in an Ashes Test, turned prodigiously to bamboozle England's Mike Gatting and herald the arrival of a cricketing superstar.

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### Australian bowling legend

**Career highlights**

- January 1992: Makes Test debut against India at the age of 22
- June 1993: Bowls out England captain Mike Gatting with his first ball in the Ashes
- 1994: Named Wisden Cricketer of the Year
- June 1999: Named man of the match in Australia's World Cup final victory over Pakistan
- August 2001: Claims 31 wickets in the Ashes, helping Australia to a 4-1 win in the series

**Shane Warne**  
Date of birth: Sept. 13, 1969

- October 2002: Named Man of the Series in Australia's 3-1 victory over Pakistan
- March 2004: Takes 26 wickets in a three-game series against Sri Lanka
- September 2005: Scores 40 wickets in the Ashes, but Australia loses
- December 2006: Claims 4 for 49 against England, sparking an Australian comeback victory in the Ashes
- December 21, 2006: Announces retirement from international cricket

## Harmison quits ODIs Vaughan returns and set to lead

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

England fast bowler Steve Harmison announced his retirement from one-day internationals on Thursday, while injured captain Michael Vaughan was recalled for next month's triangular series here.

Harmison, 28, said he wanted to concentrate on Test cricket as he quit ahead of the series with Australia and New Zealand and next year's World Cup.

"After careful consideration and having taken advice from several people who have been close to me throughout my career, I have decided to retire from one-day international cricket with immediate effect," he said in a statement.

"This has been a difficult decision but I want to play at the highest level for as long as I can and believe that concentrating solely on Test cricket is the best way forward for me during the next phase of what will hopefully be a long England

career," he said. Harmison has struggled with his form, taking just one wicket in the first two Ashes Tests against Australia. He took five in Perth but was unable to prevent Australia taking an unbeatable 3-0 series lead.

He has taken 67 wickets in 46 one-day matches for England at an average of 30.7 runs.

Selectors said Vaughan's inclusion in the 16-man squad for

January's series with Australia and New Zealand was subject to fitness.

They will delay appointing a captain until after the Ashes Test series against Australia, scheduled to end on January 6.

"Michael Vaughan has been included in the one-day squad subject to fitness," said chairman of selectors David Graveney.

"He has made excellent progress with his recovery from injury but we feel that it would not be appropriate to announce the captaincy of the one-day side at this stage and will delay any announcement until after the Test series."

Left-arm spinner Monty Panesar, who took eight wickets at Perth, has been included in a one-day squad for the first time.

**SQUAD**  
James Anderson, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, James Dalrymple, Andrew Flintoff, Ed Joyce, Jon Lewis, Sajid Mahmood, Paul Nixon, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Chris Read, Andrew Strauss, Chris Tremlett, Michael Vaughan.



STEVE HARMISON