

Warne needs one more

REUTERS, Melbourne

Another major milestone is looming for Shane Warne as the Australian prepares for his final Test against England in Sydney next week - 1,000 international wickets.

The 37-year-old crowned his farewell appearance at the Melbourne Cricket Ground by becoming the first player to reach 700 Tests wickets in Australia's emphatic three-day victory.

He went into the match on 699 wickets and needing just one more to reach the once-unimaginable 700 barrier and finished with seven to lift his career total to 706.

Combined with his 293 one-day scalps, Warne now has 999 international wickets, leaving him on the cusp of another remarkable achievement when he farewells the game at the same ground where he made his Test debut in 1992.

"I couldn't ask for this Test match to go any better, from a team point of view and a personal point of view," Warne told a news conference.

"And going back to Sydney, where it all started for me. If I can continue to bowl well and get a few wickets in Sydney, it'll be great."

Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralidaran is the only bowler to have taken a 1,000 international wickets and the off-spinner claimed his 1,100th victim in a one-day against New Zealand on Thursday.

Warne stunned the cricketing world when he announced last week he was retiring after the Ashes series but said he has no regrets about his decision.

He took seven wickets in Melbourne and scored an unbeaten 40 with the bat to win the man of the match award, proving his retirement is unrelated to his form.

Sanath blazes

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J Marshall lbw b Vaas	0
H Marshall c Sangakkara	0
b Fernando	17
Franklin b Malinga	2
Adams b Malinga	3
Gillespie not out	1
Extras: (lb-4, nb-4, w-4)	12
Total: (For 8 wks 50 overs)	285
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-169, 3-222, 4-229, 5-229, 6-257, 7-262, 8-280.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	10	0	50	3
Malinga	10	0	66	2
Fernando	5	0	43	1
Muralidaran	10	0	48	1
Jayasuriya	10	0	42	0
Dilshan	5	0	32	0

SRI LANKA

Tharanga c McCallum b Franklin	68
Jayasuriya c Fulton b Franklin	111
M Jayawardene not out	34
Sangakkara c and b Vettori	36
Atapattu not out	7
Extras: (b-3, lb-3, nb-12, w-12)	30
Total: (For 3 wks in 40 overs)	286
Fall of wickets: 1-201, 201-2, 3-271.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Franklin	10	0	69	2
Mason	6	0	60	0
Gillespie	9	0	64	0
Adams	7	0	54	0
Vettori	8	0	36	1

Result: Sri Lanka won by seven wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Sanath Jayasuriya.
Toss: New Zealand
Umpires: Steve Davis (AUS), Tony Hill (NZL)
Television umpire: Evan Watkin (NZL)



Did U Know?

English cricketer George Gunn was recalled at the age of fifty to tour West Indies after an interval of 17 years.



Jagmohan Dalmiya (Former Indian cricket board chief) "I am confident that I will fully regain the opportunity to continue to serve the game of cricket with full honour."
After quitting the post of the president of Cricket Association of Bengal.

Asif set for SA tour



CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan are considering sending an extended 17-member squad for next month's tour of South Africa, according to Iqbal Qasim, who is standing in for chief selector Wasim Bari. The team is due to be announced on December 29.

Qasim, a former Test cricketer, said the selectors still have to take a couple of key decisions before announcing the squad. "We are undecided on the final composition and are also considering including an extra member in the squad," he said.

The national team problems are currently in a conditioning camp at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, ahead of the tour that begins on January 6 with a tour match against South Africa.

Pakistan are unlikely to make any surprise changes in the Test squad that won the home series against the West Indies 2-0 earlier this season though Mohammad Asif, the Pakistan seamer involved in the drug controversy along with Shoaib Akhtar, is sure to make a comeback.

Shoaib, however, remains doubtful after having failed to impress much in the few domestic games he took part in recently.

Shoaib and Asif missed the Champions Trophy and the series against the West Indies because of the ban for testing positive for nandrolone. However, the two were cleared by an appeals committee earlier this month and are available for the tour of South Africa.

While Asif has proved his form and fitness in the recently concluded Twenty20 Cup, Shoaib is yet to convince the selectors.

Qasim, who was in Lahore to witness the conditioning camp on December 27, refrained from commenting on Shoaib's physical fitness. "We have seen Shoaib play in domestic matches and also in the camp," he said. "The bowler

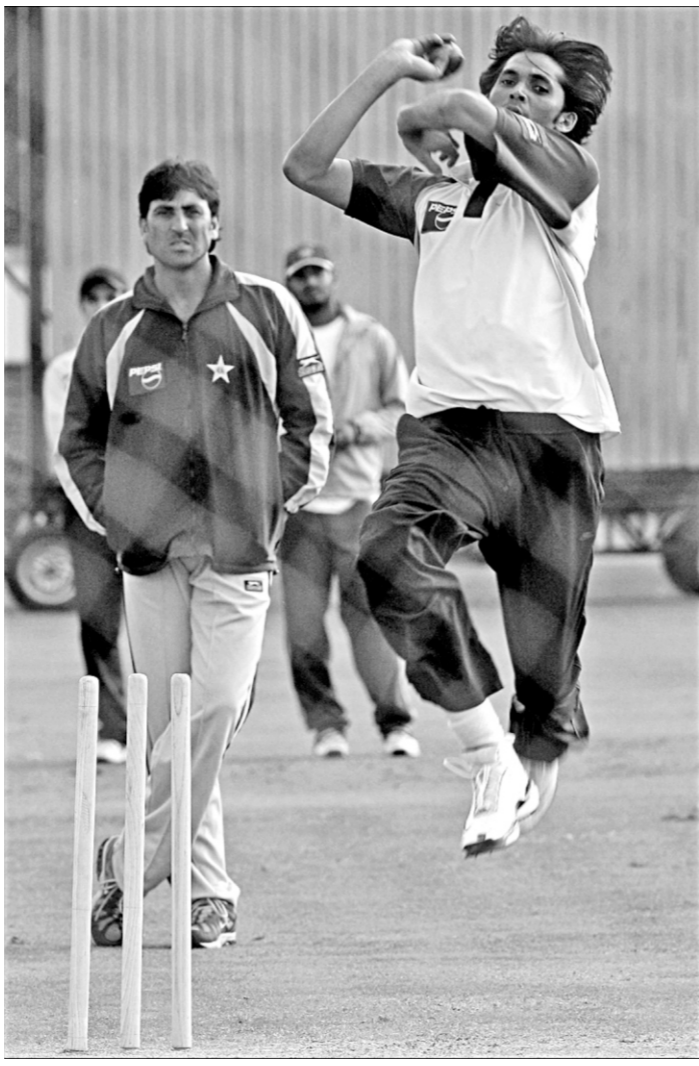
remains in contention for a place in the team."

If Shoaib is overlooked for the tour of South Africa, Mohammad Sami is most likely to get the selectors' nod.

Sami was dropped from the Test squad against West Indies after a disappointing tour of England this summer in which he took eight wickets at 58.25 from three Tests. But he returned for the last two

one-day games against West Indies and took two wickets for 76 from two matches.

Another decision to be considered, Qasim said, involved the inclusion of a reserve wicket-keeper for the tour, an idea suggested by Bob Woolmer, the coach. Pakistan A team's Zulqarnain Haider is expected to be included in touring party as cover for Kamran Akmal.



BACK FOR GOOD? Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif is on his delivery stride as teammate Younis Khan (L) watches him during a practice session at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Panelist slams drug upend



AFP, Karachi

An expert on a panel which overturned doping bans on Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif said Wednesday that the handling of the case by Pakistani cricket authorities did not meet international standards.

Danish Zaheer, who is also vice-president of the Asian Federation of Sports Medicine, said the original tests on the pacemen were flawed as there was confusion over a urine sample, while forms were not dated properly.

But Zaheer, the only member of the three-man appeals committee that voted against clearing the new-balled pair, said the decision to lift the bans was also against world doping guidelines.

"There were numerous evidence-based major departures and non-compliance with international standards while con-

ducting tests on the Pakistani cricketers and due to these the whole procedure becomes null and void," Zaheer told reporters.

A Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) tribunal in November banned Akhtar for two years and Asif for one after they tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone.

Zaheer said the "PCB's testing procedure was flawed" and that the committee which originally banned the pair should have taken several technical problems into account.

"There was no proper notification to the players for the tests, as you need to give players written notifications before testing, but instead players were informed on the telephone," he said.

"There were no names on the forms, Asif's form had no date on it and it could not be established whose urine sample it was, whether of (Pakistan captain) Inzamamul Haq or of Akhtar," said Zaheer.

An appeals tribunal headed by a retired high court judge overturned the bans on December 5 on the grounds that the pair had not knowingly taken the drugs and had not been fully educated about doping.

"The two bowlers did not know much about doping and that was why they refused to have their 'B' samples tested, which was very important," said Zaheer.

But Zaheer, the dissenting voice in the 2-1 verdict, said the reasons for clearing them were also not acceptable.

"I differed on the verdict simply because... those (reasons) given by the appellate may not be acceptable to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)," said Zaheer.

WADA last week challenged the lifting of the bans in the Court of Arbitration for Sports in Switzerland. The International Cricket Council has backed its stance.

Aussies rout England

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Pietersen, promoted above Paul Collingwood to No.4 in the order, lasted just nine balls before he was beaten by Clark and bowled off-stump for one.

Collingwood was out for 16 in a soft dismissal, taking a Lee delivery on the rise and driving straight to Justin Langer close to the wicket.

Andrew Strauss was out to the fifth ball after tea, nibbling at Lee to be caught by Gilchrist for 31 made in 174 minutes.

Clark struck again for the third time, trapping Flintoff leg before wicket for 25, to expose England's brittle tail at 108 for six.

Shane Warne removed Sajid Mahmood (0) and Steve Harmison (4), both lbw, to reach 706 Test wickets.

"To play against the second best side in the world and be four-nil up, and to play the way we're playing, I don't think any Australian side I've played in has played so good at the moment," Warne said.

Lee had Monty Panesar caught in the gully for 14 and clinched victory when he bowled Matthew Hoggard for five. Chris Read remained not out on 26, made in 127 minutes.

marked his debut Ashes Test with six catches.

Symonds only added two runs to his overnight total before he was out for 156.

He had a rush of blood and chased after a wide ball from Steve Harmison to edge to Read and end his five-and-a-half hour knock containing 15 boundaries and the six off Collingwood that brought up his maiden Test century on Wednesday.

Clark gave Read his sixth dismissal, off Mahmood for eight, before McGrath lasted six balls for his 35th Test duck, second only in Test cricket to West Indian Courtney Walsh (43).

Mahmood finished England's most successful bowler with 4-100 off 21.3 overs, with Flintoff taking 3-77 off 22 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the third day of the fourth Ashes Test between Australia and England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings 159 (Strauss 50, Collingwood 28; Warne 5-39)	
AUSTRALIA: First innings (372 for 7 overnight)	
Langer c Read b Flintoff	27
Hayden c Read b Mahmood	153
Lee c Read b Flintoff	0
Ponting c Cook b Flintoff	7
Hussey b Hoggard	6
Clarke c Read b Harmison	5
Symonds c Read b Harmison	156
Gilchrist c Collingwood	
b Mahmood	1

Warne not out	40
Clark c Read b Mahmood	8
McGrath c Bell b Mahmood	0
Extras: (lb-6, w-1, nb-9)	16
Total: (All out in 108.3 overs)	419
Fall of wickets: 1-44, 2-44, 3-62, 4-79, 5-84, 6-363, 7-365, 8-383, 9-417, 10-419.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	21	6	82	1
Flintoff	22	1	77	3
Harmison	28	6	69	2
Mahmood	21.3	1	100	4
Panesar	12	1	52	0
Collingwood	3	0	20	0
Pietersen	1	0	13	0

ENGLAND: Second innings	
Strauss c Gilchrist b Lee	31
Cook b Clark	20
Bell lbw b McGrath	2
Pietersen b Clark	1
Collingwood c Langer b Lee	16
Flintoff lbw b Clark	25
Read not out	26
Mahmood lbw b Warne	0
Harmison lbw b Warne	4
Panesar c Clarke b Lee	14
Hoggard b Lee	5
Extras: (lb-12, w-1, nb-4)	17
Total: (All out in 65.5 overs)	161
Fall of wickets: 1-41, 2-47, 3-49, 4-75, 5-90, 6-108, 7-109, 8-127, 9-146, 10-161.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lee	18.5	6	47	4
McGrath	12	2	26	1
Clark	16	6	30	3
Warne	19	3	46	2

Result: Australia won by an innings and 99 runs and lead the five-match series 4-0.
Man-of-the-match: Shane Warne.

Power cut stops

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unit for observation overnight. He was replaced by Howell, a South African who started the match as the television umpire.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close on the third day of the second Test between South Africa and India at Kingsmead on Thursday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 328
INDIA: First innings (overnight 103-3)

Jafer c De Villiers b Ntini	26
Sehwag c De Villiers b Nel	0
Dravid lbw b Nel	11
Tendulkar c Boucher b Ntini	63
Laxman not out	50
Ganguly c Gibbs b Ntini	0
Dhoni c De Villiers b Morkel	34
Kumble c Boucher b Morkel	0
Zaheer Khan c Amla b Morkel	2
Sreesanth c Boucher b Hall	28
V Singh c Boucher b Pollock	4
Extras: (b-1, lb-7, nb-12, w-2)	240
Total: (All out in 77.5 overs)	220
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-35, 3-61, 4-125, 5-125, 6-179, 7-179, 8-183, 9-235.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Nel	23	5	60	3
Ntini	15	4	41	2
Morkel	18	1	86	3
Pollock	14.5	10	17	1
Hall	7	0	28	1

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings

De Villiers not out	31			
Smith not out	28			
Extras: (lb-2, nb-2, w-1)	5			
Total: (For no wkt in 19.3 overs)	64			
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Zaheer	10	4	22	0
Sreesanth	7.3	2	20	0
V Singh	2	0	20	0

Mourinho

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not have handled the demands that were put on Hilario," said Mourinho.

Hilario joined Chelsea in June on a two-year deal from Portuguese first division side Nacional.

He became Chelsea's first-choice keeper in October after Petr Cech and Carlo Cudicini, the club's two other keepers, suffered head injuries.

Totti forever

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director, but never as a coach. It's not in my DNA."

Totti has played for Roma since the 1992-93 season. His finest hour came in the 2000-01 season when he led Roma to their first Serie A title since 1983.

He is one of the best paid players in Serie A, earning an estimated five million euros (6.6 million dollars) a season.

Totti is something of a rarity in modern day football having spent his entire professional career with the same team despite being courted by some of Europe's leading clubs.

Juve in for

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they were relegated for their role in the match-fixing scandal that engulfed Italian football in summer 2006.

FIFA regulations state that a player cannot appear for more than two clubs in any one season, but it they can grant a dispensation for a player they believe to be a 'special case'.

Drogba

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playing up front.

"It's a pity I have also have problems in attack because if in this moment I had other strikers playing at a great level then I would play Didier as a central defender," admitted the Chelsea boss.

"I have no Joe Cole, I have no Robben, and I have Shevchenko playing very, very far from his level, so in this moment, I have Didier as the only attacking player, so I cannot play him as a central defender."

Mourinho admits his side's shakiness at the back in recent games is cause for concern, but he has yet to decide whether he is going to splash the cash on a new defender in the January transfer window.

"At the moment, teams feel they can score goals against us, they feel it and they are scoring them, and this is a team that usually never concedes so many goals," he said.

"I can't say I will buy in January, I want JT (Terry) back as soon as possible and we are doing what we can."

Heat rising

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boss explained.

"This is a difficult period because we don't have the players to improve things, rotate and put pressure on other players. But it's not a drama.

"We're in the (last) 16 of the Champions League, semi-finals of the Carling (League) Cup, we start the FA Cup next month and in the Premiership we are four points behind the leaders with 18 matches to play.

Warne bids MCG bye



AFP, Melbourne

Shane Warne was carried off the field on the shoulders of his teammates Thursday after the incomparable star helped Australia pull off another soul-destroying Ashes win over England.

Test cricket's all-time leading wicket-taker claimed two more as England capitulated to an innings and 99 run defeat, handing the Australians a 4-0 series lead heading into next Tuesday's fifth and final Sydney Test.

Warne, who has now taken 706 career wickets, will retire after Sydney - his 145th Test and an emotional match for the 37-year-old Australian superstar, who said he had no regrets after a remarkable career.

Warne said his 5-39 in unhelpful spinning conditions in the first innings on Boxing Day could not have been scripted well, as he savoured playing in his last Test on

his Melbourne home ground before huge crowds.

"The overriding factor was that we won," he said. "That gave me great satisfaction for three days. To land the ball the way I have through the series and to walk off in Melbourne.

"It was nice of Andrew Symonds and Matty Hayden to put me on the shoulders. I was trying to get Pigeon (Glenn McGrath) but they said we can't hold two of you, so I jumped down and we walked off together."

McGrath has also announced that his hometown Sydney Test match will be his 124th and last.

Warne said he revelled in going out on an incredible high after a trailblazing career that revolutionised the art of wrist-spin bowling.

"I've got no disappointments from the game whatsoever. I've been very lucky to play in a wonderful era of Australian cricket," he told reporters after the win at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

"It was just a great time. It was great to have that satisfaction.

Good to share it. It's just been a great summer so far.

"To bowl well and land a couple of flippers and some wrong'uns today (Thursday), it was really good.

"These sort of moments are something to enjoy. It doesn't make me sad. I'm leaving on top of my game. I feel like I'm bowling as good as I have in any stage of my career.

"Hopefully 5-0 (a series sweep) is a real goal for us now. A white-wash against an excellent cricket side. If I can continue to bowl well and get a few wickets in Sydney, it'll be great."

Skipper Ricky Ponting has joked about trying to talk Warne out of his intention to retire but the master leg-spinner said he feels on top of the world, rather than disconsolate, at ending his fabulous career.

"I'm just jumping out of my skin at the moment. I suppose that's why I'm trying different tricks and all those things. I feel very happy and young and fresh."

Galle greets gesture



AFP, Sydney

Test cricket's leading wicket-taker Shane Warne has committed his charitable foundation to donate 20,000 dollars (15,600 USD) to tsunami reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka, reports said Thursday.

The move, announced at a breakfast event in Melbourne on December 26, followed reports that the foundation had failed to deliver a promised 50,000 dollars (39,000 USD) for repair of the devastated cricket ground in the Sri Lankan town of Galle.

Galle is where Warne took his 500th Test wicket in March 2004.