Kenya playing seriously

AFP, Nairobi

Kenya's cricket coach Roger Harper said Friday that none of the six associate member teams would be underrated at next month's ICC World Cricket League first division tournament in Nairobi.

He said he expected the tournament to be a close contest between the six teams: Bermuda, Canada, Holland, Ireland, Scotland and hosts Kenya, all of which have already qualified for the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies.

"It is difficult to underrate any of the teams," said Harper, a former West Indies spinner. "They have all qualified for the World Cup. They are all pretty good.'

The tournament, which will be played on a round-robin basis at three venues in the Kenyan capital, will also have an added incentive as the two top teams will qualify to take part in the first ICC Twenty20 World Championships in South Africa next September.

Kenya, stripped of its one-day international status by the ICC last vear, will start as favourites to clinch one of the two places by virtue of being the top non-Test playing

A squad of 30 players resumed training for the tournament earlier this week and the final squad of 15 is expected to be named at the

Royal honour

FROM PAGE 20

so supportive to me throughout my career, all my team-mates over the years, everyone at Liverpool Football Club, everyone at Team England, all my family and friends, and all those coaches who have helped me since I was eight."

Gerrard's 2006 highlight arrived in the FA Cup final when he scored a last-minute equaliser against West Ham United, having also levelled earlier in the game.

His goal sent the tie into extratime and the midfielder later scored in the penalty shoot-out as Liverpool claimed the trophy.

But the 26-year-old's World Cup proved to be less distinguished as he failed to fire as England lost to Portugal in the quarterfinals



Australian Frederick Spofforth recorded the first ever hattrick in Tests. His victims were Royle, MacKinnon and Emmett -- the first 2 clean bowled and the latter caught.



ESPN

(Monday) **English Premier Football League** Liverpool v Bolton Wanderers Live at 6:40 pm Portsmouth v Tottenha Live at 8:55 pm (Tuesday) Australia v England Fifth Ashes Test, Day 1

STAR Sports New Zealand v Sri Lanka

Live at 5:15 am

Second ODI Live at 4:00 am (Monday) **English Premier Football League** Newcastle v Man United Live at 11:10 pm (Tuesday) New Zealand v Sri Lanka Third ODI Live at 4:00 am South Africa v India



Third Test. Day 1

Live at 2:00 pm



Raj Singh Dungarpur (Former Indian cricket board presi-

"I am afraid that Twentv20 cricket will be the final nail on the coffin of Indian cricket.

Langer hanging up boots?

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Speculation is mounting that Justin Langer will join Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath in making the final Ashes Test at Sydney his last for

If Langer does bring the curtain down on his playing days it will end Australia's most prolific opening partnership in Test history with Matthew Hayden.

Langer, himself, has stayed away from the limelight since the Boxing Day Test finished in three days but his father, Colin, told The Sunday Age his son wasn't going to outstay his welcome.

"He's been privileged to play for his country for 104 Test matches,"

"The way he's gone about his career has been a thrill for his family. When he and Adam Gilchrist won that Test against Pakistan in Hobart [in 1999], that gave me a thrill. But the biggest highlight for me has been the way he's gone about his business as a cricketer

"To see the effort that's had to be put in, the effort no one really sees. To see what he's done to try to get fit for this series, it's just been unbelievable, the physical effort, the time he spends with his batting coach. People don't see all that, but we do."

John Buchanan would not be drawn on Langer's future following the Melbourne Test, just adding how much he is valued by the team.

"He's a tremendous character to have within the team with a set of values which he's admired for. He believes in all the traditions of the game and, really, in many ways, he's

the epitome of the baggy green cap." Following an impressive start to

the Ashes series, with 82 and an unbeaten 100 at the Gabba, Langer's form has tailed off and he hasn't registered another halfcentury. However, he and Hayden have amassed 5575 runs at an average of 51.15 as an opening partnership since first joining forces against England, at The Oval, in



JUSTIN LANGER

Vettori wishes no slips

Cricket

AFP, Queenstown

New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori wants a vastly improved performance from his inexperienced bowling attack in Sunday's one-dayer against Sri Lanka.

seven wicket victory in the opening match in Napier on Thursday, overhauling New Zealand's 285-8 with 10 overs to spare. Veteran opener Sanath

The tourists cantered to an easy

Jayasuriya did most of the damge, smashing 111 runs trom just 82 balls against a wayward attack missing most of New Zealand's frontline bowlers.

Vettori, who is replacing regular captain Stephen Fleming for the first two one-dayers in the five match series, told reporters Saturday that New Zealand's bowling attack needed to get the

"The bowling plan is exactly the same, it's just about the implementation, which we let slip in Napier." he said "Sri Lanka bat down to seven

and eight, so you've got to take

wickets at the top and try not to buy those wickets, which we tended to do in the first game.' Another potential hurdle for the home side could be the loss of experienced batsman Nathan

Astle, who suffered bad bruising to his thigh as he returned to form with 83 runs in the series opener. After a shaky start. Astle grew in confidence and controlled the tempo of the New Zealand innings.

passing the milestone of 7,000 one-day international runs before being unluckily run out.

"If we lose that experience and we lose that form it's going to mean someone is going to have to step up to cover it." Vettori said. James Marshall, who was out

first ball in Napier, is likely to step into Astle's opening spot if the 35vear-old is ruled unfit to play in Queenstown.

The final teams for the match will be announced on Sunday

In contrast to New Zealand's decision to rest some top players such as Fleming and star pace bowler Shane Bond for the early matches, Sri Lanka wants its top combination together for the lead up to March's World Cup.

Skipper Mahela Jayawardene is not expecting significant changes to the side which took the honours in the first international.

"We have to keep a combination, we need to keep confidence in the guys and have the senior group -- the matchwinners -- intact and in form as we build up to the World Cup," Jayawardene said.

MacGill not forgotten

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Australian squad for the fifth Ashes Test in Sydney, Andrew Hilditch, Australia's chief selector, has insisted that Stuart MacGill remains in the thinking of the selection panel. MacGill missed out as Australia

Despite being overlooked for the

chose to name an unchanged bowling attack for the final Test. Australia now have no Test assignments until next summer, a gap of nearly 11 months, by which time MacGill will be approaching his 37th birthday. By then, with Shane Warne having left the scene, Australia may well be considering younger spinning options in Dan Cullen, the offspinner, and Cullen Bailey, a legspinner, reasoned The Sydney Morning Herald.

The paper cited "occasional" instances of bad behaviour, and a recent suspension by his state side for an altercation with an umpire in grade cricket, as factors in a bleak

But Hilditch maintained in a statement that MacGill was still in contention. "The national selection panel carefully considered the possibility of naming a 13 for the Sydney Test to give us an extra spinning option. Stuart MacGill was carefully considered for that position and remains very much in the thoughts of the national selection panel.'

Over the years, MacGill has become something of a Sydney fixture, a ground traditionally suited to spinners. He has played in eight of the last ten Sydney Tests and his numbers (53 wickets at under 25) are better than even Warne's (62 wickets in 13 Tests at over 27) at the ground.

That record was, however, balanced against the excellent performances of the current attack through the Ashes, as Hilditch "However, to include two special-

ist spinners in Sydney would've

meant changing the attack which has performed so well in the first four Tests and has been an integral part of Australia's successful regaining of the Ashes. "After considering this, the selec-

tion panel thought it appropriate to remain with the same 12 and the same balance of the attack for the Sydney Test. "Although Sydney traditionally

will lend support to the spinners, we consider a three-man pace bowling attack (Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee and Stuart Clark) with Shane Warne and Andrew Symonds to bowl spin is well balanced and suited to the conditions we are likely to encounter in Sydney.'

MacGill is two short of 200 Test wickets from his 40 Tests, and in the last series he played for Australia, against Bangladesh in April this vear, he picked up 17 wickets.

The legspinner insisted just over a week ago that he was still happy to play on for another "two to three

A year of inevitability

close' to just fall when the stakes were the highest.

every time history seemed in the making, someone slipped as strength prevailed.

English, simply inevitable.

Whichever sides our predictions may have favoured and however better year to come.

Clark no surprise

CRICINFO, undated

Stuart Clark's stunning returns in the Ashes series have not surprised Michael Hussey, who has been regularly troubled by his current teammate's accuracy and bounce.

Hussey said Clark, the rightarm fast bowler, has always been able to hit difficult spots for batsmen early in his spell and the threat have proved especially tricky for England.

Clark has often chipped in after Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee have taken the new ball and he will start his first home Test at the SCG on Tuesday with 21 wickets at 16.76 from the series.

"I've often had battles with him while playing for Western Australia and in the nets and I wish I had a dollar for every time he went past my edge because I'd probably have an island somewhere, Hussey said. "He's been a very fine bowler for a long time and he knows his game very well. I was confident that once he got a game for Australia he'd be successful.'

McGrath's withdrawal from the South Africa tour in March gave Clark an opening and his performances have been so spectacular that his New South Wales teammate's upcoming retirement is no longer as frightening for Australia.

Clark was man-of-the-series in South Africa and he is the equal leading wicket-taker in the Ashes with Shane Warne.

"He's experienced and unflappable," Hussey said. "He's not affected by pressure too much and has a clear mind about what he's trying to do. His job is to keep chucking it into that area and he's getting the right results."

Umpiring burnout?

CRICINFO, undated

Former Test umpire David Shepherd has warned that leading umpires face burnout unless the ICC tackles the issue and appoints more officials to its elite panel.

Shepherd's comments came after Mark Benson was forced from the field with heart palpitations on the third day of the Durban Test between South Africa and India. He spent the night under observation in a local hospital.

Speaking to The Daily Telegraph, Shepherd, who stood in 92 Tests, said that the number of umpires should be increased. At the moment there are nine elite officials -- Darrell Hair has yet to be replaced -- who have to stand in an increasing number of Tests and

While the ICC recently produced figures intended to show that umpires were not being asked to stand too many times, there is an increasing argument that they, like the players, are facing burnout. "With independent umpires you

are always away from home," Shepherd said.

"The players at least get to play in Test matches at home but umpires are travelling all the time. It was a refusal to spend so much time away from his family that led to Peter Willey, one of the leading officials, to refuse to join the panel.

"It is tough for the players because they are playing highgrade cricket all the time and careers will not last as long as they did," Shepherd continued.

"I can see the same thing happening with umpires. There will be umpire burnout. The guys are under so much scrutiny. Television is so good these days and so intrusive. There are 20 cameras at a game and that puts the umpires under so much pressure." But Shepherd admitted that the

cost meant that he doubted the ICC would add more to its elite

Proteas level FROM PAGE 20

Kingsmead on Saturday: **SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 328 INDIA: First innings 240 SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings INDIA: Second innings (overnight

38-2) Jaffer c Nel b Ntini Sehwag c Smith b Ntini Dravid c Boucher b Ntini Tendulkar Ibw b Ntini Laxman b Nel Ganguly c Gibbs b Ntini Dhoni c Boucher b Nel Kumble c Amla b Hall Zaheer c Hall b Nel Sreesanth c Boucher b Hall 10 V Sinah not out Extras: (b-2, lb-1, nb-4, w-1) Total: (All out in 55.1 overs)

Hall

Ntini

Jan 2-6.

Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-34, 3-38, 4-45, 5-83, 6-85, 7-101, 8-160, 9-179. M R W 4 57 3 **Bowler** 0 16 6 48 Ntini 19 20 Pollock 9 5 25 Morkel 0 5.1 26

Result: South Africa won by 174 runs and level the series 1-1. Man-of-the-match: Makhaya Remaining match: Cape Town,

New twist to Shoaib tale

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

If every Pakistani had a paisa for every time they heard "Shoaib Akhtar has not been considered because he is not fit", then the percentage of the entire population deemed to be below the poverty line might not be as high as 35%. We could probably be a first world country now

Mind you, it isn't always the truth: like explaining flight delays with the time-honoured "We are experiencing technical difficulties", the line that "Shoaib is unfit" actually is often a convenient way of masking all sorts of troublesome issues.

He is "not match fit" again apparently for South Africa, even though he said recently that he was.

Given that his fitness and form were judged on the evidence presented from three Twentv20 games, one four-day domestic match where he bowled 21 overs and a three-day training camp (as proof, that is about as passable as that used to justify the invasion of Iraq) you have to think that there must be something more to it than just fitness. How else can you really explain not taking Shoaib (it isn't the doping taint either, for then Mohammad Asif wouldn't be

Pakistan are going to South Africa, where pitches are still quicker and bouncier than most

India's pace attack repeatedly

trouble the host's fragile top order. Pakistan also know that their batsmen are likely to struggle so they will be ever more reliant on their fast bowlers to produce

Naturally then the best fast bowlers are to be taken and if you have as many as Pakistan do, then you can afford to gamble on one who is not fully fit. Especially so if you can afford to give Mohammad Sami another chance, who even when he is fully fit, is a bigger gamble altogether.

Navedul Hasan is back in ODI form, but apart from two Tests against England, the jury is still out over how successful a Test bowler he can be. And who would the desperately out of touch Graeme Smith and Herschelle Gibb rather face first up: Shoaib or Sami?

If nothing else, surely Shoaib's experience counts for something. We justifiably bitch about the measly number of Tests he has played in what will soon be a decade of international cricket, but at 42, it is still only 27 appearances less than the five fast bowlers going to South Africa put together. Sami apart, he is the only bowler

with experience of those conditions. The speculation doesn't appear to be entirely unfounded either and there are suggestions that the

captain was adamant about not taking him So it must be, as plentiful specuthis week that Shoaib would not be picked suggested, because officials and teammates alike are again unhappy with his attitude.

The speculation doesn't appear to be entirely unfounded either and there are suggestions that the captain was adamant about not

taking him. If so, then this is a new development, for Shoaib seemed to have been rehabilitated last year, while helping Pakistan win a series against England and a Test against India. He had even, very publicly,

made up with Inzamam. What has changed since then, seeing as he has only played four matches for Pakistan in that time? And is he now that much of a hindrance to the team that his attitude cannot be dealt with if it helps win a Test series, as it did last winter?

If he has become that problematic, then does it not make more sense for the board and the team management to just come out and say it, rather than trot out tiresome and barely plausible excuses?

That would mean, of course, that they be honest and open and because we've had a paisa for each time they did that, it explains why there is so much poverty in Pakistan. It also explains why Pakistan will never be able to fully resolve its complex relationship with Shoaib

'Aus weaker sans greats'

Cricket

AFP, London

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Hag has insisted Australia will be a "lot weaker" after the Test retirements of star bowlers Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath Leg-spinner Warne, Test

cricket's most successful bowler with 706 wickets, and McGrath, third in the all-time standings with 557 and the leading quick, will both call time on their careers in the fiveday format after the fifth and final Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground starting next week.

missed Inzamam five times apiece in Tests, will be looking to bow out by helping Australia complete the first 5-0 rout in an Ashes series for "Both are great players, great

bowlers," Inzamam told

The duo, who have each dis-

Bigstarcricket.com. "Without them Australia is definitely going to be a lot weaker and teams will now be much more confident about beating them. Both players always seem to perform when Australia wins and its no

"Everybody in cricket will miss them, but more importantly I think Australia will miss them a great deal because they are big performers and take most of the team's

wickets as we can see from the fact they have over 1,200 Test wickets

"Every batsman will take a sigh of relief now they are gone.'

And Inzamam predicted Australia would struggle without their two champion bowlers. "It's not good news for Australia as I can remember a couple of occasions when they didn't play and they found it very tough.

"When India toured there a couple of years back, they (Australia) drew the series and could have

"That showed how much Australia rely on them. And the two matches England won in last year's Ashes was when McGrath didn't play. I know my own team will be a lot more confident of beating them

"Warne and McGrath are true greats and I could see that from how they took wickets in the subcontinent as well as in Australia and England. Some bowlers are good in their own conditions but cannot be as good in the subcontinent. But these two have proved themselves time and

Inzamam is set to lead Pakistan on their lest and one-day series tour of South Africa next month.

The squad includes Mohammad Asif, one of two Pakistan fast bowlers involved in a

He added that the retirements of

"There are resilient guys here

Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath

will be used as an incentive during

and they want to go out and win in

the Test next week. There are a

couple of retirement parties to

break up and the team are burning

lower middle-order, which would

take some of the pressure away

England's poor summer of 50-over

winter left. The Ashes Test series

has been a huge disappointment

but there is a triangular series

cricket and was a rare positive.

Dalrymple would slot into the

to put down a marker.'

Akhtar, 31, and Asif, 24, tested positive for the steroid nandrolone in October and were banned for two years and a year respectively

drugs offences, has been left out.

recent doping controversy. But

Shoaib Akhtar, the other quick

found guilty but then cleared of

by a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) anti-doping commission in November. But an appeal committee over-

turned both bans earlier this month.

"It was a shame Shoaib (Akhtar) couldn't make it," Inzamam added. "But he hasn't played any cricket for three months and even before that he only played a few one-day matches in England, when he had waited about nine

months to play cricket after injuries. "So he will get his chance now to play some first-class cricket in Pakistan and hopefully he will prove himself and be ready to join us for the one-day series.

"Mohammed Asif has been bowling really well. I'm pleased to have him back with us.'

The World Anti-Doping Agency, which deals with doping cases in international sport, has said it will challenge the overturning of the bans in the Court of Arbitration for Sports in Lausanne, Switzerland -a move supported by the International Cricket Council, the game's global governing body.

Jamie keen on Tests

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Jamie Dalrymple, the England offspinning allrounder, is eager to help the team avoid an Ashes whitewash in Sydney.

On a surface expected to assist the spinners. Dalrymple is in the mix to line-up alongside Monty Panesar as England try to stop the Australian juggernaut from claiming the first Ashes clean sweep since 1920-21.

Dalrymple was called up to the squad when Ashley Giles flew home to be with his ill wife during the Perth Test.

He had been part of the Academy party based in Western Australia and has already impressed with gutsy displays early in his one-day international career. "I'm desperate to play," he said.

"If I get the chance to play at

Sydney it would be superb. It would

be great experience playing

against a very good side.

from the out-of-form Andrew Flintoff, with Saiid Mahmood the likely man to make way if England opt for two spinners He made his ODI debut during

> In 14 matches he has scored 356 runs with two half-centuries while managing 11 wickets at 37 and Dalrymple believes the final Test can boost the form and morale of the limited overs team. "There is a huge amount of the

against two very good sides (Australia and New Zealand) and if we can play well in that, we can look forward to the World Cup.' But whether he plays or not, 25-

year-old Dalrymple believes the

game could spark an upturn in

England's form if they can prevent Australia taking the series 5-0. "There are resilient guys here and they want to go out and win the Test next week

"There are a couple of retirement parties (for Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath) to break up and the team are burning to put down a marker that won't be forgotten next time we're playing against the

Aussies," he said. "There is a huge amount of the winter left. The Ashes Test series has been a huge disappointment but there is a triangular series against two very good sides (Australia and New Zealand) and if we can play well in that, we can look forward to the World Cup.'

We need a Tata

because it has never experienced any load-shedding for 14 long

I don't know how many corporate houses presented a true gift like Tata, who offered a magnificent Jubilee Park that can easily accommodate both the Ramna Park and the Suhrawardy Udyan to mark its 75 years The input of Tata Steel to sport is

a benchmark for others. Tata Football Academy scouts talents from all over India and then trains them for four years. The result speaks for itself -- eight of their cadets are now in the national

Tata's sports academy is not as

big as our BKSP (Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan) but their athletes definitely win more and bigger international laurels. They have got a 25,000-capacity stadium. But it was not built for business that is prominent in our country. They love to treasure the value of human excellence. Just walk through the main entrance and have a glance at the picture gallery you will be amazed to see the galaxy of stars

that Tata have produced. Recently Tata expressed its desire to establish a steel plant (in a

for what it claimed to build a 'synergy' between the two neighbouring countries. Definitely this is a policy-making decision of the highest authority.

package proposal) in Bangladesh

the country is concerned, we need corporate organisations like Tata for a much-needed boost in the country's sport. At the advent of a new year we hope that at least one corporate

But as far as the sports fraternity of

house in the country come forward and express their desire to follow in the footsteps of the pioneering Indian business house.

predictable sporting year. found himself stripped of his title Any mention of sports in 2006 after testing positive. Neither was would be incomplete without the sprinter Justin Gaitlin spared the names of the many who have left ugly spotlight as he found himself to the clearing at the end of the on the receiving end of an eight-

But if these are the lowlights there have been enough highlights as well. Shane Warne cut a path into unchartered territory for cricketers as he castled Andrew Strauss to capture his 700th wicket. South Africa did the impossible as well; chasing down the unthinkable target of 434 in a display of outlandish hitting but these were all spots in a largely

path. Freddie Trueman, the fiery English quick passed away and football bid bye to some of its legends. Giacinto Facchetti died as did Tele Santana and the Galloping Major, Ferenc Puskas also passed away completing a poignant year for football. Truth is that 2006 will perhaps

go down in the annals of sporting

archives as the year where every-

thing so 'nearly' materialised.

Where everyone came 'oh so

Every time a perfect ending beckoned, someone fell over;

In Spain they call it cantado. In

different the outcomes may have been, to the superpowers we raise our glasses. As concerns the underdogs, we can only hold them closer to our hearts and hope for a