

Eng-SA first Test begins today

History beckons S Africans

LONDON, July 20: South Africa's cricket odyssey out of exile and back into the international fold reaches its emotional climax at Lord's on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The players and officials from the Republic have experienced some compelling moments since being readmitted to the world game three years ago but none will compare to their first appearance for 29 years at cricket's spiritual home.

"It will be an unforgettable occasion for our players," said South African coach Mike Procter.

"This is the tour of tours and Lord's is the ultimate place to play Test cricket."

When captain Kepler Wessels and his side walk out for the first Test of the three-match series it will truly signify to South Africans that they are back among the sport's elite after two decades of apartheid-enforced absence.

Few among the touring party will feel the immense sense of occasion more than Ali Bacher, the single-minded man of vision who played the most influential role in South Africa's return from the wilderness.

Now managing director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa, Bacher was at



KEPLER WESSELS

ever Test against West Indies, and their first Test series on home soil — against India — since readmission to ICC.

Yet Bacher and his party are sure to cherish above all the moment at Lord's on Thursday when the South African team step out on the ground that

conjures an extraordinary depth of feeling among cricketers.

"It is possible our players will freeze, but I like to think the atmosphere will inspire them," said Procter.

"I think England will be caught up in the atmosphere as well. A lot will depend on which team keeps cool the best."

One South African, at least, has experience of appearing in a Lord's Test.

Wessels, who had a 24-Test career with Australia, played for his adopted country in the 1985 Ashes Test against England at the game's traditional headquarters.

South Africa's skipper leads a combative set of players who should provide an authentic test for an England side battling to restore their status among the international heavyweights.

"There's just the right sort of tension in our camp," said Wessels.

"Nerves could be a factor, particularly in the first hour, but we've been involved in a few special occasions during the past couple of years so we should be getting used to them."

"It's the ultimate experience to play a Test at Lord's, but we have to look past the emotion of the occasion. We can savor that after the match is over."

Spain, United States roll on

FRANKFURT, July 20: Spain and the United States, the top two seeds, and No. 13 Canada were the only teams to sweep their first-round Federation Cup matches Tuesday, reports AP.

Defending champion Spain, represented by Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, beat Chile 3-0, while Mary Joe Fernandez and Lindsay Davenport led the United States to a 3-0 victory over the Czech Republic.

Rene Simpson-Alter and Patricia Hy took Canada to the 3-0 victory over Switzerland. There are two singles

matches and one doubles match to account for the three available points in the annual 32-country competition.

In other first-round matches Tuesday, No. 15 Indonesia defeated Taiwan 2-1; No. 8 Austria beat Poland 2-1; and No. 10 Australia edged Latvia 2-1.

In matches that resumed Tuesday after being halted by rain Monday, Sweden defeated No. 9 Belgium 2-1 and No. 7 Netherlands ousted Belarus 2-1.

In Wednesday's second-round matches it will be Germany against Slovakia, France against Italy, Japan playing Sweden and the Netherlands facing South Africa.

On Thursday, Spain meets Argentina, while the United States faces Canada.

Germany is minus world No. 1 Steffi Graf, who said she needed a rest after losing in the first round at Wimbledon but defeated Maurice Ruah of Venezuela 6-2, 7-6 in 62 minutes in the second round of the 625,000 dollars DC tennis classic on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Ninth-seeded Malvai Washington outlasted Roberto Jabali of Brazil 6-7 (5-7) 6-2, 6-3 in just inside two hours in a first-round match at the 56-player hardcourt tournament, where the top eight seeds received first-round byes.

Unseeded Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden eliminated 10th-seeded American Brad Gilbert, who coaches Agassi, 6-1, 7-5 in another first-round match.

Top-seeded Pete Sampras withdrew from the tournament on Monday due to tendinitis in his left ankle, an injury he sustained while winning Wimbledon and further aggravated last weekend during a US Davis Cup tie.

Agassi repeatedly misfired when he tried to attack the net throughout the second set, as Ruah played defensively and brought the score to 5-6.

"It was a tough set," Fernandez said. "She played very well, then she picked up her

IBF rankings

CHELTENHAM, England, July 20: Leading world rankings issued by the International Badminton Federation (IBF) on Tuesday after the Singapore Open at the weekend, reports Reuter.

MEN

1. Ardy B Wiranata (Indonesia) 1,280 points

2. Thomas Stuer-Lauridsen (Denmark) 1,060

3. Heryanto Arbi (Indonesia) 860

4. Equal, Hermawan Susanto (Indonesia) 725

5. Equal, Polul-Lerik Hoyer-Larsen (Denmark) 725

6. Joko Suprianto (Indonesia) 685

7. Joris Ollsson (Sweden) 600

8. Fung Permid (Indonesia) 510

9. Allan Budi Kusuma (Indonesia) 500

10. Park Sung-Woo (South Korea) 425

WOMEN

1. Susi Susanti (Indonesia) 1,380

2. Yu Zhaoying (China) 940

3. Ra Kyung-Min (South Korea) 855

4. Christine Magnusson (Sweden) 690

5. Bang Soo-Hyun (South Korea) 655

6. Camilla Martin (Denmark) 630

7. Kim Ji-Hyun (South Korea) 580

8. Hisako Mizut (Japan) 545

9. Han Jingna (China) 540

10. Zarinah Abdullah (Singapore) 530

Tracy Austin calls it a day

MAHWAH, N.J., July 20: Saying she didn't love the game as much as she once did, Tracy Austin bid a tearful goodbye to professional tennis with an unexpected retirement announcement, reports AP.

Tuesday's night's announcement at the Pathmark Classic marked the second time Austin has announced she is quitting tennis.

One of the game's best young players in the late 70s and early 80s, Austin quit in 1983 before making two comebacks. One ended because of injuries she suffered in a car accident; the latest began 1 1/2 years ago.

"This is my last match. I came back because I was enjoying it," Austin said. "And about three months ago, I stopped enjoying it."

Austin then cradled her head in her hands, asking for a towel to wipe away tears.

"I can't believe I'm upset," she said. "It's the end of a long, good career."

Austin, 31, made the announcement after retiring from her opening round match against Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere because of a re-injured groin muscle. Maleeva-Fragniere was leading 6-4, 2-0.

When she was 16, Austin

became the youngest player to win the US Open in her defeat of Chris Evert in 1979. The record still stands. In 1980, she was ranked first in the world.

Austin stressed that the retirement has nothing to do with her injury, originally suffered 10 days ago while playing Pam Shriver in Newport, R.I.

In the first evening match, Shriver defeated Jill Craybas, 6-1, 6-1, with the 32-year-old veteran later pondering how to gracefully exit from tennis.

"Those of us who are over 30 are trying to figure out how to manueuvre this last stage and move to," said Shriver, admitting that the three Wimbledon semifinalists over 30 (Lori McNeil, 30; Martina Navratilova, 37; and Gigi Fernandez, 30) have provided inspiration.

Lisa Raymond, the 1992 and 1993 NCAA champion, defeated Sandy Collins, 6-2, 6-0. In the round of 16, Raymond will meet Patt Fenwick, who defeated Angela Lettice, 7-5, 6-2.

In other first-round matches, eighth-seeded Marketa Kochta bounced back from a slow start to defeat Jessica Emmons, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1. Kochta meets Stephanie Rottier in the second round.

Japan's Ai Sugiyama also bounced back from a first-set loss to defeat Kerri Phebus, 4-6, 6-3, 6-0. The 19-year-old next faces third-seeded Amanda Coetzer.

Austin plans on continuing her commenting career with

USA Network, travelling and enjoying her home in Redondo Beach, CA.

Any regrets?

"I look at the glass half full," she said. "I feel very fortunate and hope I can play until I'm 80."

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Richards' wish fulfilled

LONDON, July 20: Former West Indies captain Viv Richards, who vowed never to play in South Africa until a black president was elected, is set to sign a six-month contract for Western Province, reports Reuter.

In a statement issued through his British agent Antiguan Richards, 42, said he was "delighted to play out his career in South Africa."

Cricketing sources said Richards would sign the contract, estimated at 100,000 dollars, on Friday.

Richards, who averaged 50.23 in his 121 Test matches with 24 centuries, consistently refused to join rebel tours of the Republic during the 1980s.

Despite the subsequent dismantling of apartheid, he declined to join a pre-season tour with English county Glamorgan last year, saying he would not even consider a trip until South Africa elected a black president.

With the election this year of Nelson Mandela, Richards' criteria have been met and Ali Bacher, the director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa, said his decision was the final vindication of the changes in South African cricket.

"It means total acceptance," Bacher said. "His presence in our country will be enormously beneficial to the development of the game and we cannot do anything but benefit from his knowledge and experience."

D'Oliveira won't be there

LONDON, July 20: Basil D'Oliveira, the Cape coloured man who played 44 Tests for England, looks likely to snub South Africa's historic return to Lord's this week.

The former Worcestershire and England all-rounder has been invited to attend South Africa's first Test at Lord's for 29 years, starting on Thursday.

But D'Oliveira, who in 1968 became the central figure in a mounting campaign against South Africa's regime of apartheid, seems likely to stay at home in Worcester.

He had no replay to the invitation we sent out more than a month ago," said Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) secretary Roger Knight.

Following the dismantling of apartheid, 62-year-old D'Oliveira said in a rare, recent interview on the subject of South Africa: "People say I should forgive and forget."

"Well, that's fine. I can forgive, but don't ask me to forget because I can't."

"I've had no contact with South Africa. They haven't asked me or invited me to the Test so I have no great desire to watch them. They are just another touring side as far as I'm concerned."

D'Oliveira, who moved to this country in the mid-60s and played Test cricket from 1966-1972, aroused a storm of protest when he was overlooked for England's 1968-69 tour.

The selectors denied leaving him out to avoid a political confrontation.

However, when pace bowler Tom Cartwright withdrew from the squad because of injury and D'Oliveira replaced him, South African Prime Minister John Vorster said the all-rounder was not acceptable.

England cancelled their tour, and also the South Africans' return visit in 1970, and the Republic subsequently found itself in total sporting isolation.

Christie said he does not plan to run again until the heats of the European titles on August 7.

The British track team captain is scheduled to return to Munich next week for further treatment from Dr. Muller Wolfhardt, who was with the German soccer team in the World Cup finals.

He has already withdrawn from Wednesday's Britain versus United States meet, Friday's Grand Prix event in Oslo and the Goodwill Games which start in St. Petersburg on Sunday.

Christie pulled up clutching his left hamstring when he was beaten by Jon Drummond at the Grand Prix meet in London last Friday and flew to his specialist in Germany on Tuesday.

He has already withdrawn from Wednesday's Britain versus United States meet, Friday's Grand Prix event in Oslo and the Goodwill Games which start in St. Petersburg on Sunday.

Christie would not elaborate on the extent of the injury, but said he was still hopeful of competing at Helsinki.

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