

# Column One

## SPORTS TALK



### SA harbour another hope

CAPE TOWN, Jan 8: South Africa go into the first game of their seven-match limited overs series against England here Tuesday with only one thought in mind, reports AFP.

"We have a score to settle," is the way Peter Pollock, head of the South African selection panel, puts it.

"We have lost four on the trot to them (England), and that's something we want to change," he said, referring to the one-day internationals played in England last summer and to the 1992 World Cup in Australia.

Pollock is backing the team to win the score to settle, "is the way Peter Pollock, head of the South African selection panel, puts it.

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DeFreitas could prove particularly valuable for the opening encounter.

He has been playing for Boland, the local union a 20-minute drive away from the historic ground of Newlands which opens the series, and has had a good look at most of the South Africans.

South Africa have drafted in Transvaal's Richard Snell and Natal off spinner Pat Symcox but have not risked the fitness of Fanie de Villiers.

De Villiers, so often a match-winner for South Africa since the country's readmittance in 1992, has been left out of the squad for the first four internationals.

It means that he will not play in the fourth meeting on his home turf at Centurion Park outside Pretoria.

And although the selectors meet again to re-evaluate the squad before the fifth international at Kingsmead in Durban, there now seems little likelihood of him playing against the English tourists.

Pollock and selectors regard them both as all-rounders and, while there is a more than adequate case for Snell to make this claim, Symcox is regarded more as a defensive bowler than a batsman of note.

But in promoting his all-round theory, Pollock has made the intentions of the South Africans under Hansie Cronje's captaincy crystal clear.

"We are in a position to field up to nine batsmen and seven bowlers at the same time," Pollock said.

In this regard the whirlwind batting of Snell will certainly be used to advantage high in the order, as will the talents of Brian McMillan.

The selectors are also pinning their hopes on a return to form by Andrew Hudson and Cronje.

Both had at best a mediocre Test series, Hudson averaging 20.67 with a highest score of 45 and his captain a disappointing 18.83.

England, too, have had

their problems among the much vaunted batting line-up.

Graham Thorpe under-achieved in the Test series — although he was on the wrong end of a couple of dubious decisions — with an average of 26.29.

And Mark Ramprakash batted so poorly that his average reads a paltry 4.33 and he was dropped after only two Tests.

The upcoming series has been shoehorned into 13 days of criss-crossing the country and also including internationals in Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and East London, culminating with the final match at St. George's Park in Port Elizabeth on January 21.

TEAMS

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Andrew Hudson, Gary Kirsten, Hansie Cronje (captain), Daryll Cullinan, with the final match at St. George's Park in Port Elizabeth on January 21.

**ENGLAND:** Mike Atherton (captain), Alec Stewart, Graham Thorpe, Graeme Hick, Mark Ramprakash, Robin Smith, Neil Fairbrother, Craig White, Dermot Reeve, Neil Smith, Jack Russell, Mike Watkinson, Richard Illingworth, Phillip DeFreitas, Dominic Cork, Darren Gough, Peter Martin.

**WELLINGTON, Jan 8:** New Zealand's selectors recalled

paceman Kerry Walmsley to-day and gave three other bowlers a chance to make their Test debut when they named their 13-man squad to face Zimbabwe in next week's first Test, reports Reuter.

**LEG SPINNERS:** Greg Loveridge and pace bowlers Geoff Allott and Robert Kennedy form an experimental-looking bowling attack alongside Walmsley.

The selectors said Dion Nash was not considered because of injury, but the mission of the experienced Danny Morrison was a surprise to commentators.

The first Test in the two-match series starts in Hamilton on January 13.

**SQUAD:**

Geoff Allott, Nathan Astle, Chris Cairns, Stephen Fleming, Lee Germon (captain), Robert Kennedy, Greg Loveridge, Adam Parore, Dipak Patel, Craig Spearman, Roger Twose, Kerry Walmsley, Bryan Young.

But the ICC's cricket committee will set up an ad-

### Mission of a giant bat

COLOMBO, Jan 8: A giant cricket bat was unveiled in Sri Lanka on Monday to collect one million signatures before presenting it to the national team for next month's World Cup, reports AFP.

The 22-feet (5.6 metre) wooden replica, mounted on a truck, began its journey through some 200 towns and villages after Sports Minister S B Dissanayake placed his signature on it.

"We want to get the fans involved in the game and that is why thought of this signature campaign," said a spokesman for Coca Cola who are sponsoring the event.

Four matches in the World Cup, which starts February 14, are to be played in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India and hosting the bulk of the tour.

**MELBOURNE, Jan 8:** The Sri Lankan cricket team may continue to play controversial off-spin bowler Muttiah Muralitharan during their Australian tour, captain Arjuna Ranatunga said Monday, report agencies.

Muralitharan has been banished for throwing twice in the last two weeks — by umpire Darrell Hair in the second Test against Australia in Melbourne on Dec 26 and again in a one-day match in Brisbane last Friday by both umpires Ross Emerson and Tony McQuillan.

His tour seemed over after the game's ruling body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), rejected the Sri Lankan's request on the weekend to convene a panel to make a ruling on Muralitharan's action, which they hoped would be ruled legitimate.

ICC chief executive David Richards said umpires would remain the sole judges of a bowler's action, thus leaving Muralitharan's career in jeopardy.

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A cricket fan signs her autograph on the blade of a giant cricket bat in Colombo yesterday. The bat, a gift for the Lankan national cricket squad, is scheduled to journey across the country in an attempt to get one million signatures.

— AFP/UNB photo

### Ranatunga prefers risk



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920 pts.

2. B Lara (WI) 888

3. Inzamamul Haq (Pak)

825

4. M Waugh (Aus) 794

5. J Adams (WI) 781

6. M Slater (Aus) 765

7. M Taylor (Aus) 747

8. S Tendulkar (Ind) 737

9. G Hick (Eng) 719

10. G Thorpe (Eng) 708.

**Bowlers:** 1. S Warne (Aus)

874

2. C Ambrose (WI) 862

3. A Kumble (Ind) 829

4. W Aslam (Aus) 805

5. A Donald (SA) 796

6. I Bishop (WI) 781

7. F de Villiers (SA) 766

8. H Streak (Zimb) 745

9. C Walsh and K Benjamin (WI) 725.

**Morrison axed**

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**Zimbabwe-NZ Academy XI match drawn**

**WHANGAREI, New Zealand, Jan 8:** Zimbabwe enjoyed some pre-Test batting practice today as their tour

match against the New Zealand Academy Eleven

faded into a draw, reports Reuter.

**Maradona's threat**

at former Argentine captain

Diego Maradona's threat to

bring players out on strike

during the World Cup if plans

for bigger goals go ahead,

reports AFP.

"We must remember that,

in 1986, Maradona needed to

use his hands to score a

goal," Blatter said in refer-

ence to the controversial goal

scored by the mercurial

striker against England in

the tournament's quarterfinal

in Mexico.

Maradona's threat to lead

players out on strike at the

1998 finals in France, pub-

lished in a Spanish magazine

earlier this week, came after

Blatter proposed enlarging

the goal mouth to allow more

goals and make games more

exciting.

Under the plan, goalposts

would be widened by the

width of two balls — approxi-

mately 50 centimetres —

while the height of the cross

bar would increase by one

ball's diameter.

"Maradona has said many

things in this life ... I do not

think players will go on

strike," Blatter said a news

conference after attending

the draw for the Asian

Olympics qualifying tourna-

ment here at 207 for four.

Needless to say, Maradona

is a very good player,

but I do not think he would

help make football a better

spectacle," he said.

"I think about football like

the church — there is only a

little amount you can change

before you alter the whole

essence," said Velappan,

general secretary of the Kuala

Lumpur-based Asian Football

Confederation.

But Velappan said he fully

supported FIFA's desire to

look at ways of making foot-

ball more attractive, which

have involved controversial