

Sport

Waller steps in for Houghton

AUCKLAND, Jan 24: Zimbabwe named Andy Waller as replacement for the injured David Houghton for the World Cup cricket tournament in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka next month, reports AP.

Waller, an experienced middle-order batsman, will join the team it arrives in India following a limited-overs series against New Zealand, team officials said Wednesday.

Houghton was forced out of the World Cup when he suffered a broken foot during the second test, which ended in a draw.

He will fly home on Sunday.

Zimbabwe also omitted test batsmen Craig Wishart and Stuart Carlisle from its World Cup squad and called in big-hitting allrounder Craig Evans.

He joined the team on Wednesday and will play in the one-day series against New Zealand, which starts in Auckland on Sunday.

Wishart and Carlisle will stay with the team until the end of the New Zealand tour and then fly home.

SQUAD

Andy Flower (captain), Grant Flower, Alistair Campbell, Sean Davies, Craig Evans, Andy Waller, Guy Whittall, Paul Strang, Guy Strang, Heath Streak, Eddo Brander, Henry Olonga, Charlie Lock, Stephen Peall.

Greatbatch ignored

WELLINGTON, Jan 24: The New Zealand cricket selectors recalled all-rounders Chris Harris and Shane Thomson today to their final squad for the World Cup starting in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka next month. reports Reuter.

Coach Glenn Turner said Harris was a useful hitter, dynamic fielder and a much improved bowler who had proved highly economical in the domestic Shell Cup competition.

Thomson was named as the second spinner alongside Dipak Patel, and paceman Danny Morrison returned after missing the two Test series against Zimbabwe through injury.

Young pace bowler Robert Kennedy also won a place in the squad after performing solidly in the drawn Test series.

Among the batsmen, opener Craig Spearman kept his place after scoring a maiden Test century in the drawn second match against Zimbabwe which ended today, but there was no spot for big-hitting Mark Greatbatch.

The side, which meets England at Ahmedabad in its first game on February 14, will be without star batsman Martin Crowe, who announced his retirement last week due to a persistent knee injury.

SQUAD

Lee German (captain), Nathan Astle, Chris Cairns, Stephen Fleming, Chris Harris, Robert Kennedy, Gavin Larsen, Danny Morrison, Dion Nash, Dipak Patel, Adam Parore, Shane Thomson, Roger Twose, Craig Spearman.

Anxious hours for Murali

ADELAIDE, Jan 24: Sri Lanka are seeking clearance from their ruling body to play off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan in this week's third and final Test against Australia, team manager Duleep Mendis said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Muralitharan has not played for Sri Lanka in recent weeks after being no-balled for throwing on two separate occasions.

Asked if Muralitharan would play in the Test starting on Thursday, Mendis replied: "Chances are 50-50 right now."

"I'm waiting for a clearance from (Sri Lanka cricket officials) in Colombo because all these reports have gone to Colombo and to the ICC (International Cricket Council)."

Mendis said the team management had sent a video and medical reports to the ICC in London in a bid to prove Muralitharan bowled legitimately.

He said video footage and expert submissions from biomechanics experts cleared Muralitharan of throwing the ball in his bowling action.

"The experts have seen him, they have tested scientifically and medically. All the reports are clear, but of course the umpires at the centre can decide differently," Mendis said.

"They can say this is the way I see it and can no-ball him. But we have done all the work that we can do, to show that Muralitharan is clear."

"Most probably the ICC will circulate this (evidence) to the international panel of umpires."

Muralitharan was no-balled seven times by Australian umpire Darrel Hair during the second Test in Melbourne last month.

He was no-balled again in a subsequent one-day international against West Indies in Brisbane this month.

Lara, Arthurton recalled



BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Jan 24: The West Indies selectors on Tuesday predictably named batsman Brian Lara in their World Cup squad of 14, report agencies.

Lara, at the centre of controversy following his last-

players.

According to the statement, Lara responded by renewing his commitment to the side.

In his response, the player (Lara) restated his commitment to West Indies cricket and his respect and admiration of the West Indian community. Lara further added that if selected on the team, the would endeavour to the best of his ability.

Apart from naming their batting sensation, the selectors recalled middle-order batsman Keith Arthurton, and kept faith with wicketkeeper Courtney Browne.

Arthurton, the left-handed batsman whose left-arm slow-medium bowling enhances his worth in the one-day game, returns after missing the last two tours. New 30, Arthurton will play for the first time since the series in England.

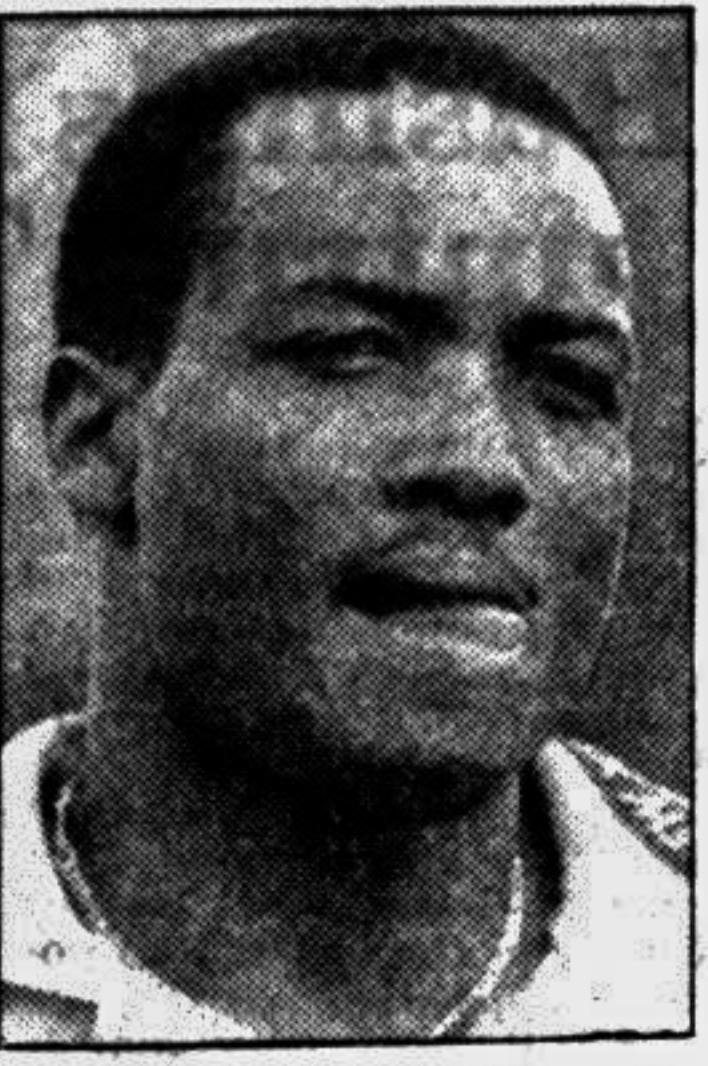
Browne also kept his place because of his superior glovework behind the stumps ahead of other candidates with batter batting credentials.

Roger Harper, the off-spinner, right-handed batsman and dazzling fielder, was selected for his third tournament as the all-rounder.

Openers Phil Simmons and Stuart Williams and fast bowler Andy Cummins have been dropped, leaving one specialist opener and four fast bowlers.

In eight innings during the recent World Series, there was no partnership above 20 runs, and none of the three openers used — Sherwin Campbell, Simmons and Williams, managed a half-century.

Campbell keeps his position, and Lara, as he has done successfully in the past, captain Richie Richardson, or



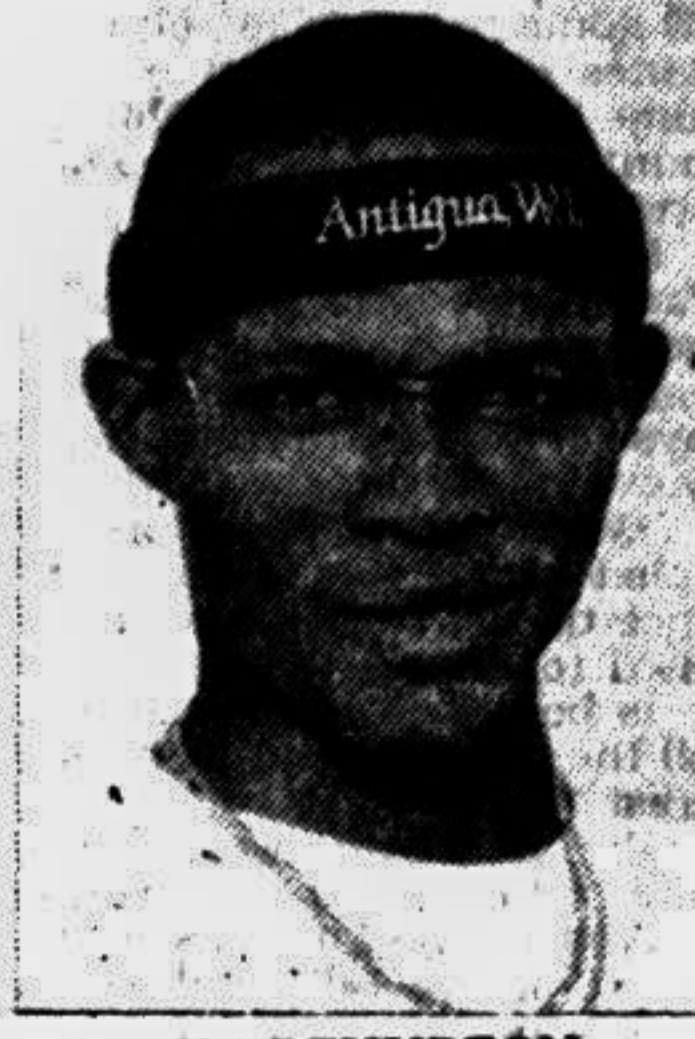
BRIAN LARA

Carl Hooper, could be asked to go in first.

Barbadian Roland Holder also gained the selectors' nod for one of the middle order batting slots.

The versatile Jimmy Adams was also picked despite a recent run of low scores.

Promising Shivnarine



K ARTHURTON

Chanderpaul is the other front-line batsman in the squad.

The fast-bowling quartet is headed by the experienced Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, supported by Ian Bishop and fast-emerging Ottis Gibson.

SQUAD

Richie Richardson, (captain), Jimmy Adams, Curtly Ambrose, Keith Arthurton, Ian Bishop, Courtney Browne, Sherwin Campbell, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Ottis Gibson, Roger Harper, Roland Holder, Carl Hooper, Brian Lara and Courtney Walsh.

Seeking son et lumiere



ISLAMABAD, Jan 24: The West Indies used to strut the cricketing world like giants, but they head for the World Cup next month looking more like pygmies, reports AFP.

The men from the Caribbean, wracked by internal rows, have been so cut down to size over the past 12 months that hopes of rekindling former glories are reserved to wishful thinkers, punters looking for long odds... and Richie Richardson.

The team skipper claimed after the latest failure in the World Series Cup: "Our chances are as good as anybody's."

It's hard to agree.

The days of the most feared attack in the world, fed by a procession of world-class pace bowlers like Andy Roberts, Michael Holding, Joel Garner and Malcolm Marshall are long gone.

The West Indian World Cup victories in 1975 and 1979 have also been relegated to the yellow-faded pages of history.

The one man who could just turn round the team's ailing fortunes in Group A against rivals like Australia, India and Sri Lanka is Brian Lara.

Unfortunately, the world best batsman is not on Christmas card terms with several other members of the team, which does not bode well for the next six weeks they have to spend together.

The cracks in West Indian supremacy have been gradually widening over recent years, as more and more youngsters have been enticed away by basketball.

But things really came to a head in May last year, when the side, after several close shaves, finally crashed to

their first series defeat since 1979 and their first home reverse for over two decades.

The Australians were hailed as the best side in the world on the back of that success but the English also went close a few months later, winning the one-day series before drawing 2-2 in the Tests.

By then, Lara had walked out and then been persuaded to rejoin the team, Winston Benjamin had been sent home for disciplinary offences and Carl Hooper, Curtly Ambrose and Kenneth Benjamin were also in open revolt.

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shoulders.

It's a genuine treat to get recognition like that but how can you really compare one all-rounder to another," he says.

But with a Test match average of 44 and a bowling average of 29, plus one of the safest pairs of hands in the slips, he has few peers in modern-day cricket.

A burly man, with flowing locks and steely demeanour in the heat of battle, McMillan's form will be a key factor if South Africa are to go one better than last time and reach the final.

England captain Mike Atherton, on the receiving end of McMillan's all-round efforts during the just-completed tour of South Africa, has described "Big Mac" as "Brilliant."

It's a pretty thin revival, perhaps, but former giants can't be choosers.

RICHIE RICHARDSON

Soon Lara, who had batted Viv Richards' one-day world record with an innings of 169, was walking out again, leaving the team to tour Australia without him.

Fortunes dipped further in the World Series Cup, when the side were knocked out in the preliminary round, leaving Sri Lanka and Australia to fight out the final.

For a while, however, the problems were clearly not being faced head on.

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Sun his heart's desire



JOHANNESBURG, Jan 24: The last time Brian McMillan was at the crease in the World Cup, he watched South Africa's hopes of a place in the final washed away, reports Reuter.

The rain-affected semi-finals against England in Sydney four years ago turned from possible triumph into tragedy for McMillan and his teammates as South Africa fell foul of controversial rain-rules.

McMillan, known as "Big Mac", and partner Dave Richardson needed 22 runs off 13 balls to take South Africa, playing in their first World Cup, to victory over England when dizzles sent the players from the pitch.

When they returned a few minutes later, the calculations had changed to 21 runs off one ball which McMillan batted away for a single and trod off in disgust.

"There's no doubt there is a big wheel ... what goes around, comes around," said McMillan in a recent interview.

"They can say this is the way I see it and can no-ball him. But we have done all the work that we can do, to show that Muralitharan is clear."

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Dreary draw in Auckland

AUCKLAND, Jan 24: Zimbabwe's batsmen failed to mount a serious challenge for victory at the second Test against New Zealand dwindled to a draw today, reports Reuter.

Zimbabwe, set 367 to win, batted out the final day without difficulty to finish at 246 for four, with openers Grant Flower and Stuart Carlisle scoring 71 and 58 respectively and sharing an opening stand of 120.

Captain Andy Flower was not out 45 and Craig Wishart was not out 12 at the close.

Spinner Dipak Patel was able to achieve some turn and bowled well to take two wickets for 60 off his 27 overs. However, the pitch deprived strike bowlers Chris Cairns and Robert Kennedy of pace and bite.

Neither was able to penetrate the Zimbabwean defence to great effect, Kennedy taking one wicket for 61 off 22 overs, and Cairns none for 49 off 23.

The draw means the two Test series is drawn 0-0.

The Kiwis put on a spectacular batting burst on the fourth day to create the possibility of a result.