

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 batsman 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, Bryan Strang, Heath Streak, Eddo Brandes, 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 for their final squad for the World Cup starting in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka next month, reports Reuter.

Coach Glenn Turner said Harris was 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 Germon (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 is 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.

But Mendis conceded that even if Muralitharan was cleared to play, the final decision on his bowling action would always rest with the umpires on duty.

"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 disgruntled batsman Brian Lara in their World Cup squad of 14, report agencies.

Lara, at the centre of controversy following his last-



BRIAN LARA

minute withdrawal from the recent World Series in Australia, was always a likely choice after he declared his intentions to return to international cricket.

But the squad announcement by the West Indies Cricket Board of Control (WICBC) suggested that he may not have been automatically embraced by the selectors.

A WICBC statement said: "Brian Lara was written to by the chairman of the selection committee regarding his involvement in several recent incidents and requesting re-assurance of his future commitment to the team, and his loyalty to his fellow

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, he would endeavour to perform 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 glove work behind the stumps ahead of other candidates with better 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.

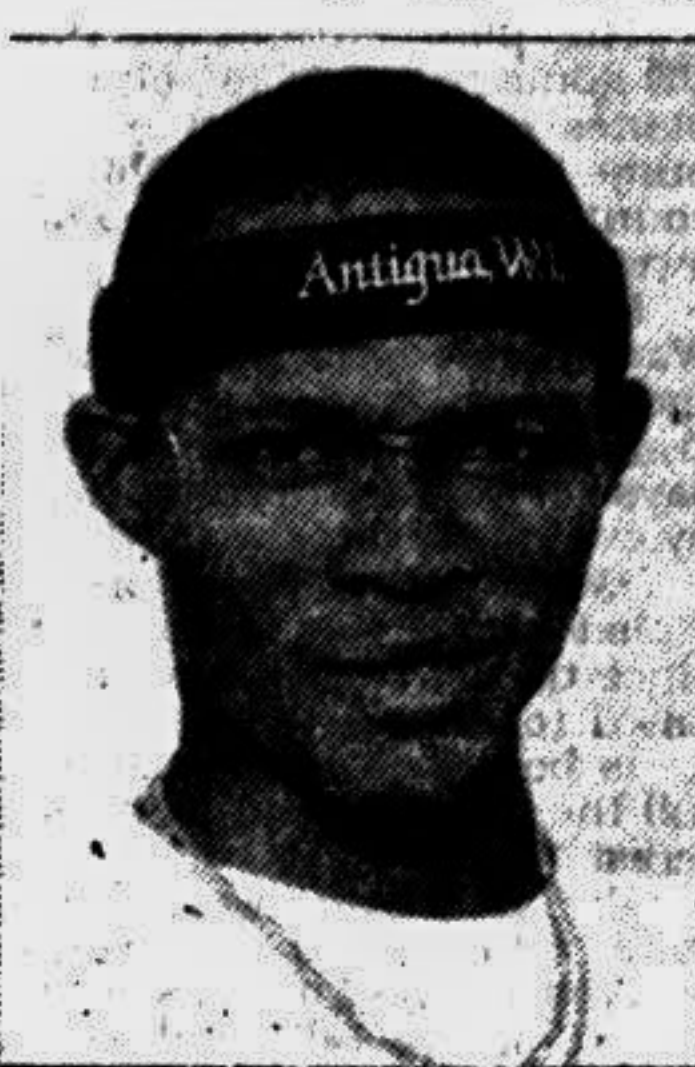
Campbell keeps his position, and Lara, as he has done successfully in the past, captain Richie Richardson, or

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 Otis Gibson.

SQUAD

Richie Richardson, (captain), Jimmy Adams, Curtly Ambrose, Keith Arthurton, Ian Bishop, Courtney Browne, Sherwin Campbell, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Otis 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 AP.

The men from the Caribbean, wracked by internal rows, have been so cut down to size over the past 12 months that hopes of reclaiming 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 world-famed attack in the 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.

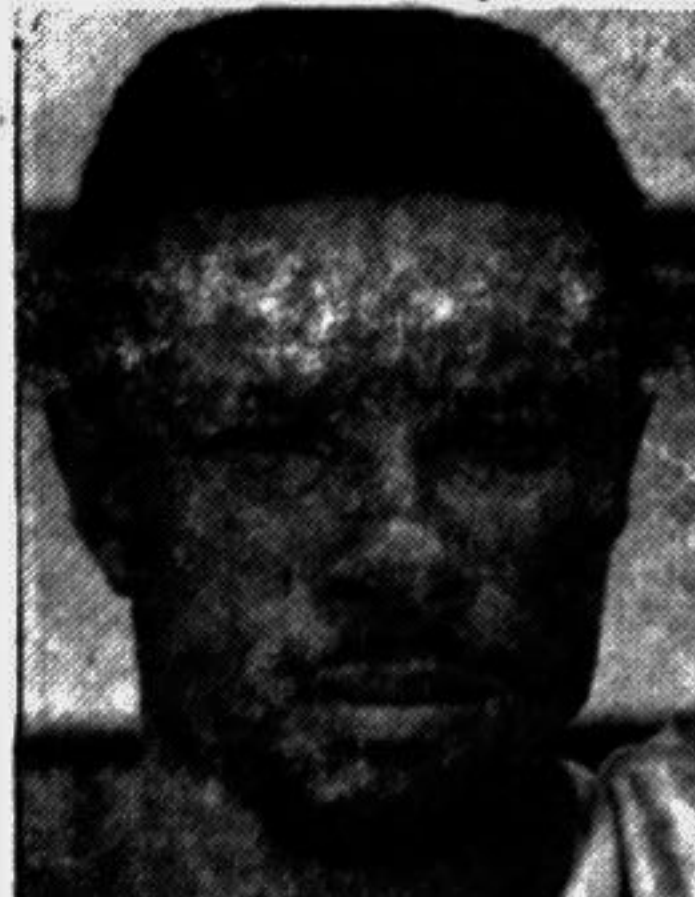
But things really came to a head in May last year, when the side, after several close shaves, finally crashed to

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.

Richardson's attempts to reunite the side were dealt a further blow with defeat to Sri Lanka in the Champion's Trophy final at Sharjah.



RICHIE RICHARDSON

Soon Lara, who had shaved 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.

Team manager Andy Roberts was able to excuse the Sharjah reverse by arguing: "Ours is a young team and it did well to get to the final."

Richardson, himself struggling to recapture any semblance of his previous form after an injury-disrupted 1994, was also trying to put a gloss on things.

After the Australian defeat he argued: "We've just been a bit below par. It happens now and then."

After a bad start to the WSC, he argued: "We have been working very hard in the last couple of days and we believe we are rid of our disease. We are coming back."

But a few weeks later the tone was changing. "I can't recall it ever happening in the history of West Indies cricket," he said. "We haven't got the calibre of players we had in the past."

"Even when we were winning there were bad habits that were creeping in. Because you're winning you can ignore them. But at this stage, it's too late."

Former Test star Holding, meanwhile, waded in: "I don't think they are a unit and that is a problem. For about 18 months now the people at home have not been very impressed with the way the team have been playing."

Richardson, however, is now back to exuding optimism.

Perhaps Lara's inclusion in the provisional World Cup squad was the reason. Or the captain's highest one-day knock in more than four years, an 81 against Sri Lanka in the World Series. Or the emergence of pace bowler Otis Gibson, who is beginning to look the part alongside Ambrose and Courtney Walsh.

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

Dreary draw in Auckland

AUCKLAND, Jan 24: Zimbabwe's batsmen failed to mount a serious challenge for victory as 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.

Chris Cairns decimated the Zimbabwean bowlers to score one of the most spectacular centuries in Test history, smacking nine sixes and 10 fours in his innings of 120 off just 96 balls.

The pitch conspired to rule out any chance of a result, playing flatter and latter as the match progressed.

The two sides begin a three-match limited over series at Auckland on Sunday.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at the close of the final day of the second Test between New Zealand and Zimbabwe in Auckland Wednesday.

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 251

ZIMBABWE: First innings 326

NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 441 for five, declared

ZIMBABWE: Second innings (overnight 39-0)

G Flower c Kennedy b Patel 71

Carlisle c Fleming b Kennedy 58

Whittall c Germon b Patel 10

A Flower not out 45

Campbell c Germon b Twose 34

Wishart not out 12

Extras (lb-6, nb-8, w-2) 16

Total (for 4 wts, 100 overs) 246

Fall of wickets: 1-120; 2-144; 3-145; 4-225.

Bowling

Allott 19 3 53 0

Cairns 23 6 49 0

Kennedy 22 3 68 1

Patel 27 6 60 2

Larsen 25 8 8 0

Twose 3 1 5 (nb-1) 0

Astle 1 0 4 0

Result: Match drawn, series drawn 0-0.

World Cup joke

A young cricket enthusiast who had carefully watched the recent cricket matches in Australia featuring West India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Australia asked his father: "Have the Australians named their team for the World Cup?" Father replied in the affirmative. Quipped the son: "What! Eleven players and three umpires?"

City beat Boys

Sports Reporter

BANGLADESH BOYS: 129 in 40.4 overs

(Rommel 27, Gausul 22, Labbu 22, Russel 4/16, Polash 3/25)

CITY CLUB: 130 for four in 43.5 overs (Chayon 37, Ishaq 22, Reza 22 n.o.)

City Club earned a victory in the Yamaha First Division cricket league when they handed Bangladesh Boys Club a six wicket defeat at home yesterday.

Chasing a paltry 130 to win in 45 overs, the hosts prevailed in the 44th over losing only four wickets.

Opener Sajjadul Karim Chayon scored highest 37 runs off 87 deliveries inclusive of five boundaries while Amir Ishaq (22) and Rezaul Rahman (22 not out) were the other leading City Club batsmen.

Earlier, Bangladesh Boys were on 129 when they lost their last wicket in the 41st over.

City Club's Mohammad Russel grabbed four wickets in 8 overs conceding only 16 runs. He was equally supported by pacer Palash who took three wickets.



Some words of consolation from Andre Agassi to compatriot Jim Courier after the former had won their gruelling of five-set Aussie Open quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday. Agassi had to bring out the best in him to eliminate Courier 6-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

Veterans stun the crowd

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

It was a veterans' day at the Australian Open Wednesday.

First, the German lion Boris Becker shortlisted the 21-year-old Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia and then veteran Australian Mark Woodforde gently eased out another 21-year-old, Thomas Enqvist of Sweden.

turned pro, he had reached the quarter-final stage of the Australian Open. It was no mean achievement for a boy of just 17. And the next year saw the youngest ever men's champion at the Wimbledon, the Mecca of lawn tennis.

In those days Boris served and volleyed with consummate ease and had been the bane for many famous players of the time.

Kafelnikov has worked very hard since turning pro in 1992 and currently holds the number 7 slot of the men's world ranking. But Becker, who had struggled in his earlier rounds, made short work of Kafelnikov (6-4, 7-6, 6-1) to set up a semi-final match against another veteran Mark Woodforde on Friday. Watchout, the lion is on the prowl for his second here.

It was altogether a different kind of ball game between Mark Woodforde and Thomas Enqvist. In these days of high stakes and power tennis, the Woodforde-Enqvist match was a breath of fresh air. Not that the young Swede forgot to show his strength, it was the left-handed Woodforde who made all the difference. He did not have a particularly strong serve compared to Enqvist, yet Woodforde fired as many as 16 aces mostly placings in the three-setter. He was not afraid to give his subtle touch with sliced backhand volleys and set up delectable returns from the net most of which were sure winners. He had a break each in the three set won comfortably (6-4, 6-4, 6-4) a place in the semifinal, his first in a Grand Slam as a singles player. What a pity that

Becker a veteran at the age of only 28. But in the Open era when boys are inducted into the men's world at the tender age of 17, there is hardly any scope to rephrase the word.

In 1984, the year Becker

took total control of the match and made courier play to his tune. In a gruelling five-setter (6-7, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2) Agassi prevailed over the two-time Australian Open champion. He will play Michael Chang in the semis.

MARK WOODFORDE

Huber ends Spain's hopes

MELBOURNE, Jan 24: Germany's Anke Huber ended the Spanish challenge in the women's section of the Australian Open today, knocking out number two seed Conchita Martinez in three sets to go into only her second Grand Slam semifinal, reports Reuter.

The 21-year-old ninth-ranked Huber came back from a set down to beat Martinez 4-6, 6-2, 6-1 in one hour 44 minutes in a match disrupted by rain in the middle of the second set.

Martinez, a semifinalist in the last four Grand Slam events, bows out with compatriot and third seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, who was beaten on Tuesday in an extraordinary marathon against US teenager Chanda Rubin which went to 16-14 in the final set.

In an error-riddled match, Martinez had held her game together more than a wayward Huber in the first set but then fell behind 3-1 in the second when the heavens opened on the Flinders Park Centre Court and play was stopped.

When the match restarted about 45 minutes later under lights and with the sliding roof in place, Martinez

slipped heavily with the score at 4-2, grazing the knuckles on her right hand and slightly injuring an ankle.

She went on to lose the set 6-2, and with her forehead obviously suffering fell behind 3-0 in the decider, losing 11 straight points with a succession of drives landing well over the baseline.

The injury was treated but Huber, scenting victory, took the ball earlier and with her forehead at last finding its range and direction, kept up the momentum to break for a third time to take the match at 6-1.

Martinez's defeat means that Spain will be unrepresented in the women's singles semifinals for the first time since 1990. Rubin, the conqueror of Sanchez-Vicario, now plays number one seed Monica Seles on Thursday for a place in the finals.

The eighth-seeded Huber said she sensed that Martinez had lost her concentration after she fell but also recognised the advantage of playing indoors after the break for rain.

Huber, in top form at the end of 1995 and winning through to the final of the season-ending WTA Tour Championships, will now meet Amanda Coetzer who ended Swiss teenage prodigy Martina Hingis's hopes of beating the Russian 6-4, 7-6, 6-1.

After losing the first set, Kafelnikov appeared set to level the match when he raced to a 5-1 lead in the second set tie-breaker.

But Becker found his way back to a set point at 6-5, producing a breathtaking, lunging volley at 5-2, arguably the shot of the tournament.

Kafelnikov, 21, who has played in only one Grand Slam semifinal, said Becker's performance showed the difference in class.

"It was really close but that's what makes the difference between a great player and a good player. There is no question that Boris is a great player."

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 semifinals 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 drizzle 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 trotted off in disgust.

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

"I'd like to believe in Pakistan we won't get a situation like that again because I find it hard to believe it will rain like that again."

McMillan, 32, goes to the World Cup on the sub-continent with the mantle of the world's best all-rounder resting uncomfortably on his

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."



Amanda Coetzer of South Africa sends a forehand towards Swiss starlet Martina Hingis during their Australian Open quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday. Coetzer won the hard-fought encounter 7-5, 4-6, 6-1.

Yevgeny, Courier bow out

MELBOURNE, Jan 24: American Andre Agassi won back tennis' world number one ranking today with a bruising five-set quarterfinal victory over compatriot Jim Courier at the Australian Open, report agencies.

Agassi clawed his way back from two sets down for the first time in a major event to take the match 6-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in three hours, 18 minutes of ferocious power tennis.

Agassi, given his chance to regain the top spot after last Saturday's third-round demise of top seed Pete Sampras, looked as though he had let the opportunity

slip within the first hour as Courier raced to a two-set lead.

Down a break after the first game of the third set, Agassi seemed despondent and completely unable to tame eighth seed Courier's booming forehand and serve, both at their brutal best.

But the man who at his best can outreturn any opponent, raised his game just in time, moving into a 180 kph (112 mph) serve and drawing