

Windies call in two tyros

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Apr 16: Jamaican opening batsmen Robert Samuels and Jarbadian fast bowler Patterson Thompson are the only West Indies newcomers in the first cricket Test against New Zealand starting here Friday, reports AP.

Samuels, a flashy left-hander, becomes the seventh player chosen to fill the troublesome Test opening spot since the great Gordon Greenidge retired in 1991.

In 35 Tests since then, there has only been one century partnership. Samuels, 25, scored his fourth first-class century for the President's XI off the New Zealanders in the four-day match in Grenada over the weekend.

Thompson, 24, is rated the fastest bowler in the region. He grabbed 23 wickets in the regional season but has struggled with a leg injury since playing for Barbados against English county Worcestershire in Bridgetown on March 31.

Two Trinidadians return to the team after enjoying season bests in the Red Stripe Cup. Batsman Phil Simmons earns a Test recall for his 641 runs in the Red Stripe Cup as well as his prolific performance in the just-concluded one-day series against New Zealand.

Leg-spinner Rajindra Dhanraj, who has had three Tests in three separate series, returns after bagging a record 48 wickets in the Red Stripe competition.

Simmons has opened the batting in all 22 of his Tests, but in the one-day series he scored all his runs batting in the middle-order. His last Test appearance was in India in late 1994.

Barbadian batsman Roland Holder, who has been in the West Indies team since 1993, seems set to make his Test debut in front of his home crowd.

Courtney Browne retains the wicket-keeping spot despite his recent struggling behind the stumps.

Gooch's last, Law's first

LONDON, Apr 16: Former England captain Graham Gooch hinted on Monday that the coming season could be his last playing for Essex, reports AFP.

Gooch, who is one of the eight contenders for the two vacant places on the England Test selection panel, revealed he has his sights set on a coaching job.

Gooch, who made his first-class debut in 1973 and will be 43 in July, said "I am not getting any younger and the time has come to think seriously about the future."

"Ideally, I would like to take up a coaching post and put something back into the game which has given me so much pleasure over the years."

"Hopefully such an opportunity will come along which suits me. In the meantime I'm just looking forward to another season with Essex."

Essex's new overseas player, Australian Stuart Law, joined his colleagues at Chelmsford and admitted that he is looking forward to his first taste of county cricket.

He said: "I am here on the recommendation of Allan Border, and Mark Waugh who both played for Essex. I understand I will bat at number four in the county championship and probably open in the one day games."

"I regard this as a great opportunity to forward my career. Hopefully I will perform well enough to win a place in the Australian Test team."

"I know I have come here with a reputation as a one day player but that is something I want to change. I want to be looked upon as a good player in the four and five day games."

Higuita omits himself

BOGOTA, Apr 16: Flamboyant Colombian goalkeeper Rene Higuita said Monday that he had decided to cut himself from the national team roster because he felt he was playing substandard soccer, reports Reuters.

"I'm not well, I don't feel right," Higuita said on national television and radio, explaining his decision to drop off the team.

"I'm still not up to the necessary level to assume the responsibility of playing on the national side," he said.

The head of the Colombian soccer federation, Alvaro Fina, said in a telephone interview that he has accepted Higuita's resignation with regret but without any doubt that the 29-year-old athlete was acting in what he believed to be the best interest of the team.

"He told us very honestly that he was playing at a low level and didn't feel as if he were in shape to be on the selection," Fina told Reuters.

Atherton walking on air

LONDON, Apr 16: England captain Mike Atherton, sporting a rare smile, said he was enthusiastic about the new season despite the dismal performances of the national side over the winter, reports AFP.

There were real doubts about whether Atherton had the desire to carry on after the World Cup shambles that followed the 1-0 Test defeat and 6-1 one-day international setback in South Africa.

But three weeks with New England coach David Lloyd — a father-figure to Atherton — one Lancashire pre-season tour of Jamaica has restored the sparkle.

Atherton said, "I'm enthusiastic about the new season. I only played one game in Jamaica but scored a century and I feel in pretty good shape now."

The England captain has often looked miserable since taking over the job from Graham Gooch three years ago but Lloyd believes the sulky demeanour will be less in evidence during England's home series against India and Pakistan.

Lloyd said "I think Mike will be a happier character this summer. Not because of my presence but because he identifies that as an area he has to brush up on."

Atherton refused to speculate about his re-appointment as England skipper — with two new selectors due to be appointed later this week from a list of eight candidates.

But there is no doubt now he wants to continue — or that Lloyd fully expects to be working with Atherton on the international scene this summer.

Lloyd said, "I'm comfortable with Mike and I'm certain he's comfortable with me. I've known him since he was 14. I treat him as a friend and a colleague."

"He's got his opinions and I've got mine. We don't always agree but we can debate things."

Lloyd, who "jumped at the chance" to take over as England's coach, underlined his friendship by being at the airport to meet Atherton after that depressing World Cup campaign.

And they spent hours together in Jamaica as Lloyd fulfilled his last assignment with Lancashire. "We needed time to talk," he said.

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Flamengo fly on Romario's wings

RIO DE JANEIRO, Apr 16: Romario scored two more goals to take his total to 10 in seven matches as Flamengo won their seventh straight game in the Rio de Janeiro championship at the weekend, reports Reuters.

The Brazilian World Cup hero, who appears to be finally back to his best after a mediocre season last year, also set the other goal for his striking partner Savio as Flamengo beat Madureira 3-0.

Vasco da Gama scored five second half goals to beat Fluminense 5-3 and are the only team left with a realistic chance of overtaking Flamengo in the first stage of the competition.

Brazilian champions Botafogo, who played two South American Libertadores Cup matches in Chile last week, fielded a reserve side but still beat Volta Redonda 1-0.

Palmeiras lead the second stage of the Sao Paulo championship after coming from behind to beat Mogi Mirim 2-1 away in one of their hardest games for weeks.

Palmeiras, who won the first stage, have been averaging over four goals a match but fell behind in the 40th minute to a goal by midfielder Rodrigo.

Left-back Junior equalised the stroke of halftime and striker Luizao scored his 16th goal of the tournament when he grabbed a second half winner.

Sao Paulo are level on points with Palmeiras after a 2-1 win over Santos, who dominated the game but failed to take their chances. Former Santos winger Almir scored both goals for Sao Paulo.

Warning about 'warm pants'!

LONDON, Apr 16: Sportsmen and women who wear tight-fitting "warm pants" designed to prevent muscular injury may run a risk of developing harmful blood clots, a British medical journal reported today, reports Reuters.

The Postgraduate medical journal reported the case of a 25-year-old man who wore the shorts regularly for five months and who wore the shorts regularly for five months and who developed a deep vein thrombosis in his leg resulting in a blood clot on his leg.

The shorts, known as warm pants, contain a layer of material which is used in wet-suits. They have a massaging effect designed to stimulate circulation and are often used by athletes wanting to prevent muscle injury.

"They are rather trendy and some people are wearing them just to look good. If someone has previously had deep vein thrombosis I would certainly advise against them," said cardiologist Nigel Jowett, who treated the man at Withybush Hospital in Scotland.

"We cannot say that wearing the pants directly caused the condition but there may be an association."

"Whilst the pants may control swelling within the covered area, any exercise induced swelling outside the garment will not be controlled allowing an exacerbating of this tournament effect, slowing venous return and allowing venous pooling," Jowett said.

ATP rankings

MONACO, Apr 16: (Reuters) Leading rankings issued by the ATP tour on Monday:

- 1. Pete Sampras (US) 4,431 points
- 2. Thomas Muster (Austria) 4,251
- 3. Andre Agassi (US) 4,006
- 4. Michael Chang (US) 3,875
- 5. Boris Becker (Germany) 3,698
- 6. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia) 3,377
- 7. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia) 2,416
- 8. Thomas Enqvist (Sweden) 2,298
- 9. Jim Courier (US) 2,188
- 10. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa) 2,031
- 11. Sergi Burguera (Spain) 1,686
- 12. Marc Rosset (Switzerland) 1,683
- 13. Arnaud Boetsch (France) 1,603
- 14. Michael Stich (Germany) 1,560
- 15. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine) 1,423
- 16. Marcelo Rios (Chile) 1,392
- 17. Todd Martin (US) 1,351
- 18. Maliva Washington (US) 1,272
- 19. Renzo Furlan (Italy) 1,201
- 20. Alberto Costa (Spain) 1,179

Boston Marathon Tanui, Pipping the victors

BOSTON, Massachusetts, Apr 16: Moses Tanui kept up Kenya's supremacy in the Boston Marathon on Monday as he led home four teammates in his country's complete domination of the race, reports AFP.

Tanui, running in his first marathon, ran home in 2 hours 9 minutes and 18 seconds, to beat out compatriots Ezekiel Bitok, who came second, and third-placed Cosmas Ndeti, who had won the previous three races.

And, on a larger scale, it kept up Kenya's run with a sixth straight win in the men's event.

Lameck Aguta came fourth and Sammy Lelei fifth to complete the golden day for the east African country.

Germany's Uta Pipping, 30, on Monday won her third women's event in a row with an official time of hours, 27 minutes and 12 seconds.

Pipping easily beat out Kenya's Tegla Loroupe into second place.

The 38,000-strong race began at midnight when 700 elite runners began the course from Hinkington.

Ethiopia's 1989 winner Abebe Mekonnen pushed the pace to threaten Kenya's early dominance, while Russia's Alla Jijlaeva and Japan's Nobuko Fujimura were prominent in the women's race.

Than Ndeti surged to the front bringing with him a group of 15, mainly Kenyans, including Tanui, Bitok, Aguta, Turbo Tumo, Joseph Kamau, John Kagwe and Lelei, who has run 2 hours 7 minutes 2 seconds.

At 29 km, Ndeti nearly fell after colliding with a compatriot, but was controlling the course well a few moments later as the group went down to nine members.

A few kilometres behind, Loroupe looked set to be running towards a Kenyan triumph although she messed up a refreshment stop by coming to a standstill.

However Loroupe against shook off Pipping while Tanui attacked in the men's event in a group with Aguta and Bitok leaving Ndeti behind.

Ndeti tried hard to claw back the deficit in a vain attempt for his fourth successive win, but Tanui, the 1991 10,000m champion, ran inexorably to victory.

Loroupe found it tough over the last kilometres and Pipping, lifted by an applauding crowd, surged past to cross the finishing line first.

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Nobuko Fujimura (L) of Japan pips Sonja Krolik of Germany to the finishing line the 100th Boston Marathon on April 14. Nobuko came third. — AFP/UNB photo

Joao Japan's promoter?

SEOUL, Apr 16: FIFA president Joao Havelange has been accused of abusing his position as head of football's governing body by one of his own vice-presidents, reports AFP.

Dr Chung Mong-Joon claims the Brazilian is attempting to derail South Korea's attempt to beat Japan for the right to become the first Asian country to host the World Cup final in 2002.

Chung, who heads South Korea's World Cup bidding committee, said Havelange is clearly bias towards Japan.

"It is very unfortunate and very undesirable to see interference by the FIFA president," complained Chung.

Chung has been angered by press reports quoting Havelange praising the praises of Japan's bid and by what he sees as the FIFA president's unofficial campaigning for Japan.

"I hope he still remembers what neutrality means. If not, we are going to see another unfortunate example of misuse of power," said the South Korean, who heads the multi-million dollar Hyundai heavy industries conglomerate.

FIFA's 21-strong voting committee will decide on June 1 in Zurich in Switzerland which of the two Asian powers will host the Cup.

Both sides have been carrying out massive promotional campaigns to clinch the votes needed for victory but some South Korean officials privately claim the Japanese government have been unfairly trying to influence certain votes.

In March Japan's export-import bank announced more than one billion dollars of uncommitted financing for Brazil, mainly for infrastructure projects.

The announcement of the loan coincided with the visit to Japan of Brazil's President Fernando Henrique Cardoso who promptly confirmed that his country would be backing Japan's World Cup bid.

There have also been unconfirmed reports that at least one of the three African countries which will vote on June 1 — Mauritius, Cameroon and Tunisia — will receive loans from Japan.

"I had better not speculate on Japan's motives," remarked Chung.

The 45-year-old Chung is convinced that a dirty tricks campaign is being waged against him.

"There have been reports in the Japanese press that I gave a Hyundai car dealership to Havelange's son-in-law, Richard Teixeira in a bid to try and win Brazil's vote."

"It is completely untrue. Japan seeks to be running a very negative campaign. These reports are very malicious and I am considering taking legal action," said Chung.

The South Korean is still also upset over last year's failed attempt by some FIFA officials to have the June 1 vote brought forward by six months.

"Such a plan was against all rules of fair play. It was like trying to shorten a match to only 45 minutes after one side took the lead. I am glad that what looked very like a conspiracy was blocked by the European votes in FIFA," said Chung.

Chung will again be hoping for European support and the anti-Havelange faction came the June 1 vote.

For the first time since Havelange took control of FIFA 22 years ago there is a serious bid to oust him.

Sweden's Lennart Johansson, president of UEFA, has announced he will challenge Havelange in the next election for president and he has the full backing of Chung.

"The system must be changed. FIFA must become more transparent," insists Chung.

His outspoken comments about the running of FIFA could prove expensive for his country's World Cup hopes but he refuses to be silenced.

"There is no point in being quiet. Changes are needed. Principles must come first-campaigning second," he declared.

Pre-Olympic tournament World champs roll on

ATLANTA, Apr 16: Two penalty stroke conversions by captain Tabir Zaman brought Pakistan, the world champions, their third successive win at the six-nation pre-Olympic men's hockey tournament Sunday, reports Reuters.

Pakistan's 2-1 victory over the United States at Clark University ensured they go into the last two of their round robin matches, on Tuesday and Wednesday, with a point advantage over their great Asian rivals India.

India dropped their first point when held to a 1-1 draw by Britain while, in the day's final game, South Korea gained their first win, beating Argentina, the Pan-American champions, 4-2.

Pakistan's Zaman converted the 7-metre awards on either side of the interval after the United States had shocked their more illustrious opponents by taking the lead, Ahmed El Maghraby, the American's former Egyptian international, put the hosts ahead in the 20th minute.

The result was a considerable improvement for the Americans on their previous outing against Pakistan, when they lost 7-0, also in a pre-Olympic tournament, in 1963 at Lyon, France.

Mudassar Ashgar, the Pakistan manager, paid tribute to the Americans' improvement, saying: "They played very good hockey." But Ashgar added: "I am not a happy man. We didn't play well. Sometimes the Pakistan team doesn't play the level we expect of them."

Jon Clark, the new British coach of the United States team, was delighted with his team, commenting: "We are improving. At the moment we are charging up the mountain. We showed today that we can hold our own, even during a bad spell against Pakistan."

The first two matches were played on the practice area as the pitch markings had still to be painted in on the main pitch at Clark University.

On a very