

Sport

Hussain's note of caution

LONDON, June 10: England batting hero Nasser Hussain is sounding a note of caution amid the euphoria which has greeted Sunday's nine-wicket triumph over Australia in the first Test at Edgbaston, reports AFP.

"We have won three games in a row now. We have a settled side, and everything is going in the right direction," said Hussain, whose brilliant 207 in England's first innings was his highest Test score.

"But this side we are playing against is the best in the world and they will come back at us. The strength of our character will show not when everything is going for us but how we do when their class players come at us."

The England vice-captain added the campaign to restructure and streamline English cricket should continue as planned and not be shelved just because a dispiriting trend of defeats has been arrested.

"When you are playing badly everything is wrong in the game and when you are playing well everything cannot just then be right," he told the BBC.

"There are different things we have to sort out, and people above me are looking into that. Not everything is rosy in the garden — there are still things to do."

Meanwhile, coach David Lloyd, an object of media ridicule during England's winter tour of Zimbabwe, was relishing the jubilant mood sparked by England's Test victory which followed their 3-0 clean sweep in the one-day series.

Star-starved US meet

INDIANAPOLIS, June 10: Several world-class athletes, including Olympic stars Michael Johnson and Carl Lewis, will be missing when the US national championships start here on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Big attractions Johnson and Lewis won't even be in town, and world record-holders Dan O'Brien and Mike Powell have bowed out because they, like Johnson, are injured.

Mary Slaney, the queen of American Runners, also is unlikely to participate, but not by choice. The 38-year-old Slaney is under IAAF suspension for a doping test at last year's Olympic trials, and US officials are not expected to defy the IAAF edict although they have not suspended her.

Against this background of intrigue and uncertainty, American athletics is likely to experience the beginning of a changing of the guard, coaches and officials say.

While Olympic champions Allen Johnson, Derrick Adkins, Charles Austin, Kenny Harrison, Randy Barnes and Gail Devers and women's 400-metre world record holder Kim Batten seem certain to secure World Championships berths in the five-day qualifier, new faces also are expected to emerge.

But this year's championships are particularly hard-hit. At least in star quality, Lewis, on the verge of retirement, is skipping the meeting by design, but double Olympic champion Johnson, injured in last week's million-dollar race with Donovan Bailey, had hoped to add another world title.

So had three-time world decathlon champion O'Brien. But under US rules only those who finish in the top three in the American championship are eligible for the world meeting.

Seles to play at Eastbourne

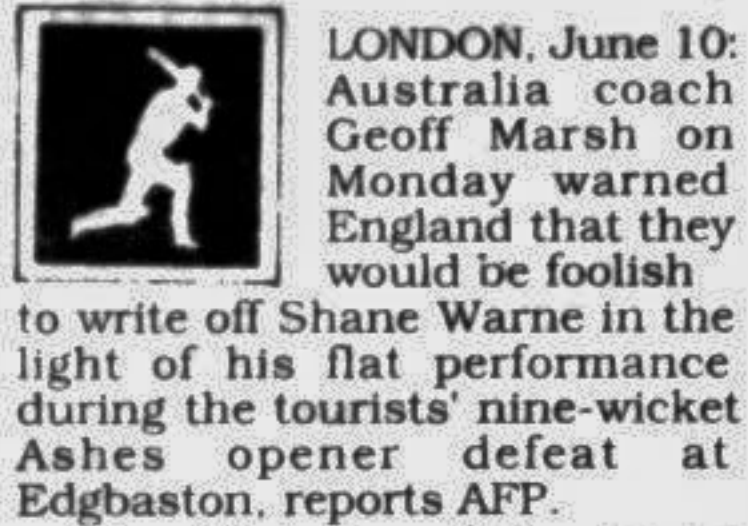
EASTBOURNE, England, June 10: Defending champion Monica Seles will play in next week's Direct Line International grass-court championships, the traditional warm-up for Wimbledon, reports AP.

Organizers said Monday the 23-year-old American will join a strong field that includes French Open champion Iva Majoli of Croatia, Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic and Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.

Sales, who needs to win Wimbledon to have captured all four Grand Slams, will also be joined by American teenager Venus Williams and Russia's Anna Kournikova.

Defending Wimbledon champion Steffi Graf has also indicated she will compete although she has not confirmed her entry.

Marsh's Warne warning



LONDON, June 10: Australia coach Geoff Marsh on Monday warned England that they would be foolish to write off Shane Warne in the light of his flat performance during the tourists' nine-wicket Ashes opener defeat at Edgbaston, reports AFP.

The Victorian leg-spinner returned match figures of one for 137 as England wrapped up victory with a day to spare when Alec Stewart hit Warne for two boundaries in three balls.

England's wicketkeeper pulled Warne to the square leg boundary and then smashed him through extra cover for the winning runs sparking a mass invasion of the pitch by England's jubilant fans.

And Warne's overall performance prompted claims that winter surgery on his spinning finger has changed him from the most feared bowler of his time, with a startling 240 wickets from 52 Tests, to just an extremely good Test player.

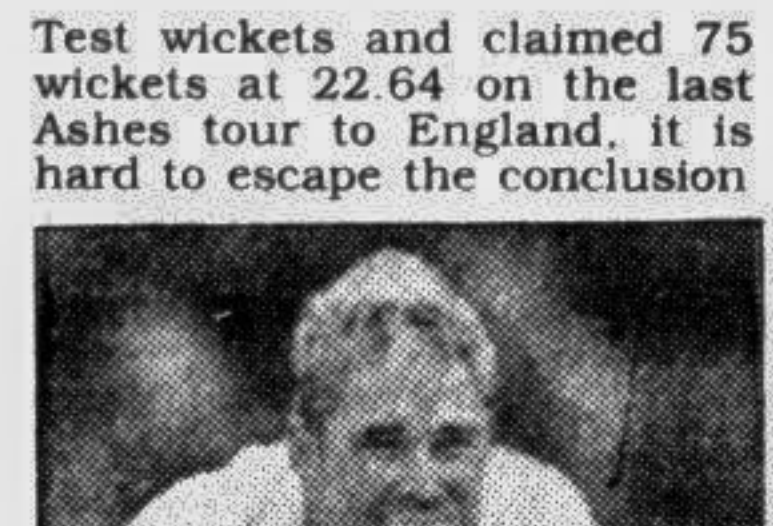
But coach Geoff Marsh, who has held talks with the 27-year-old in a bid to care his problems, is confident Warne will bounce back.

"Everyone expects Shane to bowl people out all the time," claimed Marsh. "When we won in South Africa he came on first change and bowled magnificently on a green top in Port Elizabeth."

"I don't think anything has changed with Shane. I think the pressure we put him under with only 118 on the board in the first innings was not enough for him but he turned it enough yesterday to suggest he will gain before the end of the series."

"The wickets are slow and the opposition over the years have obviously done their homework on him because he is the best bowler in the world. I thought they played him very well in the first innings but England can write him off at their peril."

Nevertheless, for a player who was the youngest Australian in history to take 200



Test wickets and claimed 75 wickets at 22.64 on the last Ashes tour to England, it is hard to escape the conclusion

bowler worrying Australia's management a following the first Test performances of Glenn McGrath and Michael Bevan.

They were both given testing work-outs in the nets at Edgbaston on Monday with markers put down on the length Marsh wanted them to bowl.

He explained: "We sat down last night and this morning and went through the Test match and I believe there are things we were needed to work on."

"It's quite obvious that our bowling was either too full and those are the things we have been working on this morning."

Marsh added: "I am very positive we will play better cricket than we are playing at the moment but we have to prove that out in the middle."

"Records say this side will play better. They have worked hard but it's obvious that England are playing better cricket at the moment."

But Warne is not the only

Surrey look into Lewis affair

LONDON, June 10: Surrey have launched an inquiry into an incident in which all-rounder Chris Lewis allegedly threw punches at a spectator at the end of their Sunday League match against Essex, reports AFP.

The former England star is reported to have aimed punches at the spectator after alleged racist comments were made.

Defending Sunday League champions Surrey suffered their first defeat at the Oval for two years, with Lewis' final over costing 15 runs and the match.

But, while climbing steps to the dressing rooms, Lewis is said to have initially ignored verbal abuse from the spectator before launching two blows at the man's face.

Surrey's Australian manager David Gilbert said the club will be taking no action against Lewis, who plays in today's Benson and Hedges Cup semifinal against Leicestershire at The Oval.

But McGrath or Kasprovic is bowling a very good line and thus the batsmen are having trouble at that end, if they have to turn round and face Shane at the other end it makes it a different ball game."

Reiffel, who picked up 19 wickets in the last three Tests here in 1993, was a surprise omission from the original 17-man tour party.

Reiffel broke down twice during the nine-week tour of South Africa earlier this year. He didn't figure in Australia's 2-1 Test series win and picked up just one wicket, playing in three of the seven one-dayers.

"I was disappointed, but I never gave up," Reiffel said. Although the tour management wants Reiffel to play, Marsh said he would the final decision to him.

"We're going into the game (against Nottinghamshire) with four quickies and we feel that practice out in the middle is probably better than just rolling your arm over in the nets."

He won't do a lot of bowling in that game but if we're going to need him for Lord's he'll need a couple of games under his belt."

Reiffel agreed. "I would like to play as soon as possible," Reiffel said. "One thing that's shown out from the

Aussie-Notts tie today

NOTTINGHAM, England, June 10: Medium paceman Paul Reiffel, a reinforcement for Australia's cricket side, will be in the line-up Wednesday for Australia's first-class fixture against Nottinghamshire — just 24 hours after arriving in England, reports AP.

The 31-year-old Reiffel, a former Test player, has a wealth of knowledge of English conditions but has been blamed for Australia's nine-wicket thrashing in the first Ashes Test.

Reiffel is expected to strengthen the attack while proving back up for the injured fast bowlers Jason Gillespie and Andrew Bichel. Both Glenn McGrath and Gillespie are on their first tour here and looked only ordinary in the first Test.

Only Michael Kasprovic used a year's experience with English county side Essex to bat five wickets in the match and looked by far the pick of the Australian bowlers.

Reiffel had played at least a year of league cricket, it would have been of tremendous help," McGrath said.

"The conditions are so different here, you must know something about it, until such time you'll continue to struggle," the lanky fast bowler added.

"I guess I haven't really adjusted to the wickets over here." They are a lot different to back home in Australia or in the West Indies or South Africa, and hopefully in the next couple of games I can come to terms with them a bit more."

Coach Geoff Marsh ruled Gillespie out of next week's second Test at Lord's. Gillespie tore his left hamstring while sending down just 10 overs in the four-day finish at the start of the six-Test series.

"Jason will not play in the next two county matches, which automatically rules him out of the next Test at Lord's," Marsh said prior to the match in Trent Bridge on Wednesday.

Reiffel arrived Tuesday morning and joined the team for a light work out in the afternoon.

"I've been keeping myself fit. Once the bowlers started to breakdown, I thought I had a chance to join the squad at

some stage," Reiffel said. Reiffel, who picked up 19 wickets in the last three Tests here in 1993, was a surprise omission from the original 17-man tour party.

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Office cricket from June 14

The fourth Office Cricket League, organised by the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM), will begin in the city from June 14.

Eight teams, split into two groups, will feature in the round robin first phase from where top two finishers from each group will qualify for the semi-finals. The four teams finishing at the bottom will fight for the plate.

On the inaugural day, Acme Laboratories, one of the two joint champions last year, will take on Mannan Group at the Dharamdhi Cricket Stadium. The other champions Regensia Line will play their first match against Manami International on the following day at the same venue.

The participating teams are: Group A: Acme Laboratories, Partex Group, Mannan Group and Bangladesh Police. Group B: Regensia Line, Biman, Aquamarine and Manami International.

Cute h'ball

Old Ideals recorded a 18-13 victory over Narinda Pragati Boys Club in the lone Cute Premier handball league match held at the handball ground adjacent to Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 11-5. Enam of Old Ideals scored highest six goals and Sumon added four. On the other hand, Kajal scored five goals for the Narinda outfit.

Abahani begin football camp tomorrow

The football camp of the Abahani Krira Chakra begins tomorrow.

The league runners-up are to take part in the forthcoming eighth Asian Cup Winners' Cup to be held in Sri Lanka next August. The tour of the Dharamdhi outfit, however, may be called off to pave the way for smooth going of the league.

The following eleven booters have been asked to report to coach Abu Yusuf by 12 noon at the club premises tomorrow: Bipal, Munna, Sohul Reza, Ali Mansoor, Hasan-Al-Mamun, Partha Protim Kundu, Barun Bikash Dewan, Rakib, Mizan and Mamun Joarder.

Syria smash Maldives

DUBAI, June 10: Results of World Cup Asian Zone Group two qualifying matches played in Tehran on Monday, reports Reuter.

Syria 12 Maldives 0 (halftime 1-0). Scorers: A Arif 23, 50, 66, Louay Taleb 62, Said Zaidan 66, 88, 90, Ali Shaikh 57, Ammar Rihawiy 69, Redwan Abri 82, 0, Tallal Khaled 86.

Iran 3 Kyrgyzstan 1 (1-1 halftime). Scorers: Iran — Khodadad Azizi 3, 79, Karim Baqeri 52. Kyrgyzstan — Sergel Rostov 19.

Standings P W D L F A Pts Iran 4 4 0 0 28 1 12 Syria 3 2 0 1 24 1 6 Kyrgyzstan 3 1 0 2 4 10 3 Maldives 4 0 0 4 0 34 0

Remaining matches (in Tehran): June 11 — Iran v Maldives, Kyrgyzstan v Syria, June 13 — Iran v Syria, Maldives v Kyrgyzstan, Syria v Kyrgyzstan (to be arranged).

Last lap for Linford?

LONDON, June 10: Linford Christie will spearhead Great Britain's European Cup challenge by racing in a sprint double in Munich on June 21 and 22, reports AFP.

The former Olympic and world champion, with 15 victories in the competition behind him, will mark his likely final appearance in a British vest over 100m and 200m.

Olympic silver medalist Roger Black, who takes over from Christie as men's captain after the event, will race over 400 metres, looking for his fourth European Cup victory at the distance.

Women's captain Sally Gunnell will continue her comeback from injury by lining up in the 400 metre hurdles.

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French World Cup organising committee co-president Fernand Sastre presents the golden trophy in Paris on June 9. The football fiesta will kick off just a year from now. — AFP/UNB photo

Copa kicks off today

SANTA CRUZ, Bolivia, June 10: The current South America's World Cup qualifying battle has resulted in second-string squads at Copa America, starting on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The organising South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) is paying the price for pressing ahead with the tournament at a time when the contest for places in France is reaching a climax.

The decision to hold Copa America every two years was made at the start of the decade. But in 1995, the CSF, with FIFA's backing, devised a new-look format for the region's World Cup qualifiers.

The nine nations now meet each other twice in a marathon competition which requires 18 rounds of fixtures in the same number of months. As a result, the Copa has been crammed in between the qualifiers.

The tournament opens just three days after the latest round of World Cup games while the final, on June 29, is just one week before the next round of qualifying matches.

Naturally, all countries have given absolute priority to reaching France, reducing the Copa to a mere training session in which they will test some of their less experienced players.

"This Copa America has caused difficulties for all the teams," said Argentina coach Daniel Passarella, already upset at the lengthy format for the World Cup qualifiers.

Of the 12 teams, only world champions Brazil, automatic qualifiers for France, Venezuela, who have no real chance of going, and Bolivia, possibly feeling some obligation as hosts, are fielding full-strength squads.

Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay and Mexico are sending mixed squads, with a sprinkling of regular internationals among the less experienced.

Peru and Ecuador, are fielding what are effectively under-23 teams.

The June 26 final could be in one of two venues — depending on who reaches it. If the host nation qualifies, the game will be held in La Paz, altitude 3,600 metres. If they fail, the final will be staged at sea level in Bolivia's second city Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Bolivia, with three high-altitude venues, is the least appropriate host to a tournament in which most teams are forced to arrive at the last minute. There can be little acclimatisation.

Competition starts with Group A matches between Chile and Paraguay and Argentina and Ecuador. The group will be in the country's third largest city of Cochabamba, at 2,800 metres.

Group B, which features the hosts, Venezuela, Peru and Uruguay will be split between La Paz and Sucre, which is considerably lower, games involving Bolivia, clearly wanting to make the most of home advantage, will be in La Paz and the others in Sucre.

Santa Cruz will host Group C, which includes Brazil and Colombia and the two Central American nations which have been specially invited, Costa Rica and Mexico.

Under the circumstances, Bolivia, who enjoy a huge advantage when playing in La Paz, and Brazil seem favourites to meet in the final.

Bolivia would be delighted to repeat their 1963 triumph, when they hosted and won the tournament for the only time. None, however, would be willing to swap the trophy for a place in France next year.

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