



Scene from yesterday's eighth round of the Prime Bank tournament at the NSC.

—Star photo

Taylor ready for WI tour



SYDNEY, Dec 27 (Sydney Morning Herald/ Internet):

Mark Taylor has celebrated Christmas by committing himself to leading Australia on their coming tour of the West Indies.

Quashing speculation about his retirement, Taylor said while preparing for the fourth Ashes Test in Melbourne: "I'm fairly sure I'll go to the West Indies if the selectors pick me."

"I'm enjoying playing. The side's playing well with me as captain. Providing those things are maintained, I'll keep playing."

"Whether this is my last Boxing Day Test, I don't know. A year's too long."

There's the West Indies, then Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, then Pakistan and

India here next summer. There are too many games between now and then. I'll see what happens in the next six months."

Taylor refuted the notion that he had been persuaded to play on by the Australian Cricket Board, which is seeking stability after the recent ructions involving Mark Waugh's and Shane Warne's 1995 fines for accepting money from an Indian bookmaker.

"My decision is unaffected by what's happened away from the game," he said.

He confessed that the challenge of playing against the West Indies again offered him stimulation as batsman.

Twenty of his 102 Test matches have been against the

West Indians, and he has averaged 28.11 against them compared with 44.7 overall.

"I got picked to play for Australia in 1989 because everyone assumed I'd be a good player of fast bowling," he said. "I think I've proved that in my career, yet the one side I haven't played well against is the West Indies. They've been my one bogey side."

"The side I've done the best against is Pakistan, who have the best all-round attack I've faced in 10 years. I don't know why that is. Maybe because I started against the West Indies, I wanted too much to do well against them."

Less of a motivation would be the Test series in Zimbabwe in September-October 1999, he said, although a century against the Africans would make him the first player to score 100 runs against each of the Test-playing countries.

"I suppose it's a target, but whether or not I make a hundred or not, I don't think it matters that much. It'd be nice to say you've made a hundred against everyone. I've made a hundred against everyone I've played so far, and I'm delighted to have done that. But I won't be good now."

Taylor was proudest, he said, of his catches off Shane Warne and other spin bowlers.

"With faster bowlers, you've got more time to see it. So you've got time to dive, and do those great-looking things. With the spinners, you're up so close; they're better catches. They're all reaction, and all technique. If your technique's not quite right, they don't go in. So generally they give the most satisfaction."

"I'll only go if I'm feeling the same way I am now."

A more immediate target, he said, was Allan Border's world record of 156 Test catches. Taylor has taken 154, mostly at first slip.

"It's probably one of the few stats I keep on myself: that and how many Tests I've captained. Runs and averages are too hard

to keep. Catching is a big part of my game. I've never been much of a bowler, as you saw at the Prime Minister's XI game a week ago. Catching's something I've always felt I had to work on quite hard, because you spend a lot of time in the field. If you don't enjoy your fielding, you're wasting the biggest part of the game."

"It's something I've worked hard on through my career, thanks to Bob Simpson in the early days. When I was 21, I came into the NSW side and he asked me where I fielded. I said first slip. He hammered me for about five years to turn me into a good slipper. My catching record is something I'm proud of."

Asked about his secret, he said: "You've got to have a bit of natural ability, but most guys who get to first-class cricket have got that. From 21 to about 27, I worked very hard. I used to get a lot of bruises on my hands from Simmo belting balls at me, and teaching me how to give, and turn, get my head in the right spot, and all these sorts of things. They hold me in good stead now."

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As the tie is decided on re-

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a third match will be played on

Tuesday. It will be the ninth be-

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They met twice in the final of

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