

Big boost for Kenyan cricket

NAIROBI, Dec 29 (Reuters/Internet): Kenya's cricket team has won a sponsorship deal worth \$130,000 a year from local beer firm Kenya Breweries, allowing it to turn professional before the World Cup in England next year, officials said on Tuesday.

The Kenya Cricket Association (KCA) said part of the money would be used to pay salaries for the 21 players and the training staff, including West Indian coach Alvin Kallicharran.

The national cricket team has turned professional five months ahead of the World Cup after Kenya Breweries Ltd announced a \$130,000 annual sponsorship package on Monday," KCA Secretary Anil Sakar said in a statement.

"We shall expect them (cricketers) to play without problems as we start our World Cup build-up," KCA Chairman Jiminy Rayani said. He explained the team had previously relied on the financial goodwill of companies and individuals to survive.

Kenya will start their World Cup build-up with a tour of Bangladesh in March. The team's top batsmen, Maurice Odumbe and Steve Tkolo, both play professional cricket in Bangladesh.

The Kenya Breweries five-year package can be renegotiated annually, according to the contract.

Kiwis against 5-Test series

WELLINGTON, Dec 29: New Zealand will call for an end to Australia's traditional five-match cricket series against England and the West Indies when a Test World Championship is discussed next week. reports AP.

New Zealand Cricket chief executive Chris Doig will take a proposal to an International Cricket Council meeting in Christchurch next week supporting a world title to be decided over a four-year cycle.

Doig said the traditional series — the Ashes and the Frank Worrell Trophy — will remain as part of the championship ladder but might be cut down from five to three-match series.

The traditional series are essential," Doig said. "Australia were a giant in the traditional series remained."

But there is discontent from other nations who only get to play three-Test series against teams such as Australia and England.

A paper detailing New Zealand's proposed schedule will be tabled along with similar proposals by India, West Indies and South Africa when the ICC subcommittee for a Test championship meets in Christchurch.

"We want to regularly tour and give some context to Test match cricket," said Doig.

Under the proposed schedule, countries will play each other home and away during the cycle and all Test series will have a bearing on the championship.

At the end of the four-year period the top two teams will figure in a play-off to determine the championship winners.

India's Jagmohan Dalmiya the chairman of the ICC has proposed a Test championship over a two-month period.

"Seven of the nine countries support the four-year rotating programme," Doig said. "The main aim is to give context to Test cricket, which we all want to see."

Doig felt countries like India, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe saw very little of the "brand teams" and the proposal would ensure a fairness in the proportioning of future match scheduling.

"Currently there is no regularity in the international calendar apart from the major traditional series. Every country should visit each other over a four-year period. There is a great deal of sense in it," Doig said.

Death toll rises to 5 in Sydney

CANBERRA, Dec 29: Rescue officials today put the toll at five dead in the storm-ravaged Sydney-Hobart yacht race, with hopes fading fast for a sixth missing yachtsman, reports Reuters.

Rescuers pulled two bodies from the Tasman Sea and said missing British Olympic yachtsman Glyn Charles was now officially counted among the dead though his body has not been found.

Two other sailors were confirmed dead on Monday.

The deaths dulled what should have been a champagne end to the race, when US computer executive Larry Ellison skippered his maxi Yachtona into the Hobart dock several hours ahead of defending champion Brindabella.

The last missing yachtsman was from the veteran cutter Winston Churchill. The bodies found earlier today were also believed to be of sailors from that yacht.

"We have not found the third person we're looking for," Australian maritime safety authority spokesman Brian Hill told Reuters. "And with every hour that goes past, it becomes harder and harder."

Hill said a possible sighting of a third body earlier today turned out to be false.

Rescue operations were scaled back today, with some eight aircraft scouring an area of about 225 square nautical miles.

As many as 38 aircraft were involved at the height of the rescue efforts in which helicopters plucked some 60 sailors from dismasted yachts and swirling seas.

Dramatic English win



MELBOURNE, Dec 29: Paceman Dean Headley took a rampaging six-wicket haul as England forced a rare Australian collapse to claim the fourth Test here today, reports AFP.

Four of Headley's wickets came in a dramatic 12 ball spell that stunned Melbourne Cricket Ground as Australia crumbled to 162 all out — 12 runs short of victory in the Test and five match series.

It was England's first win over Australia since a 19-run victory in the sixth Test at The Oval last year.

Australia won that series and have already retained the Ashes this time, but England could level the series with a win in the final Test starting in Sydney on Saturday.

It was an amazing comeback for England who had trailed Australia by 70 runs after the first innings.

After England's notoriously frail tall-enders fought to set a target of 175, Australia were cruising 45 runs from victory when Mark Waugh was dismissed by Headley with the score at 130 for four.

In 12 chaotic minutes, Headley dismissed Darren Lehmann, Ian Healy and Damien Fleming to have Australia on the ropes at 140 for seven.

When the scheduled close came at 7.19 pm, the England players started to leave the field, but Steve Waugh and Matthew Nicholson stayed in the middle and the umpires agreed an Australian request to continue for a further eight overs or half an hour to get a result.

England captain Alec Stewart remonstrated with Australian umpire Daryl Harper, but the game continued.

Australia were 14 runs from victory but their decision to pursue backfire when they lost their last three wickets for one run, Steve Waugh, who made first innings century, was left stranded at 30 not out.

Australia's last seven wickets fell for just 32 runs.

Australia suffered early jitters when openers Michael Slater and Mark Taylor fell cheaply.

Slater, who held four catches in England's second innings, did not wait for West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor's raised finger when trapped lbw by Headley in the seventh over.

Slater made a typically lively start to the Australian innings, hitting three fours in his 23-ball knock of 18, but his footwork let him down when he was trapped below the knee, inside his crease, by a Headley delivery that kept low.

Taylor hooked Alan Mullally to fine leg where Headley took a fine catch to dismiss the Australian captain for 19.

Graeme Hick at second slip dropped Justin Langer off Mullally's next ball as England sensed they were on level terms with the Australians after being humiliated in the second and third Tests.

Langer went on to score 30 and put on 62 with Mark Waugh before he was out to a brilliant diving one-handed catch by Mark Ramprakash at square leg off Mullally.

Mark Waugh was travelling along untruffled before he was snapped up by Hick off Headley in 11 minutes.

Lehmann capped a disappointing Test when he was out

for four driving at Headley but getting an edge to wicketkeeper Warren Hegg leaving Australia at 140 for five — still 35 runs short of victory.

Headley got an immediate breakthrough after the third drinks break of the session. Healy was caught by Hick for a duck and Australia were 140 for six.

England's 'Barry Army' fans went wild when Fleming last had three balls before he was lbw for a duck to the rampaging Headley, who had taken four wickets for four runs off 12 balls.

Nicholson went for nine and Stuart MacGill and Glenn McGrath fell for ducks.

England presented Australia with the teasing last innings target to chase after their notorious tall finish showed some spines to add 117 runs for the last five wickets.

The 80.2 over rearguard was

ENGLAND: Second innings (Overnight 65 for two)

Atherton b Fleming 0

Stewart c Slater b MacGill 52

Butcher c Slater b MacGill 1

Headley b McGrath 1

Hussain c Slater b Nicholson 50

Ramprakash b Nicholson 14

Hick b Fleming 14

Fraser not out 7

Mullally c MacGill b Nicholson 16

Extras: (b-2; lb-4; nb-11) 17

Total (All out in 80.2 overs) 244

Fall of wkt: 1-5; 2-61; 3-66;

4-78; 5-127; 6-178; 7-202; 8-221;

9-221; 10-244.

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Justin Langer 44; Darren Gough 5-96

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