

### Foreman-Holmes bout reportedly cancelled

NEW YORK, Dec 30 (Reuters/Internet): The Jan. 23 fight between aging former heavy-weight champions George Foreman and Larry Holmes will be scrubbed due to lack of funds, according to a report Tuesday in the New York Daily News.

The Daily News, citing a source close to the promotion, said promoter Roger Levitt could not meet a payment deadline last Wednesday and would still be unable to satisfy it despite a one-week extension.

Levitt was to have deposited the remaining 90 percent of the prize money - 9 million dollars for Foreman and 3.6 million dollars for Holmes.

The fight was being billed as the "Battle of the Aged" because Foreman would be 50 and Holmes 49 when they got into the ring.

Foreman, 76-5, was recognised as the undisputed heavy-weight champ after knocking out Michael Moorer in November 1994. His last fight was November 22, 1997 when he lost a 12-round decision to Shannon Briggs.

Holmes is 65-6. His most recent bout was a 12-round defeat to Brian Nielsen in Copenhagen, Denmark on January 24, 1997.

### Weary Walsh

DURBAN, Dec 30: The beleaguered West Indies cricket team suffered a body blow today with the news that Courtney Walsh will miss the fourth Test against South Africa because of a hamstring injury, reports Reuters.

New-ball partner Curtly Ambrose is struggling with knee and back problems which could also rule him out of the match at Newlands in Cape Town starting on Saturday.

"Courtney has a slight hamstring tear and will not be playing any cricket for seven to 10 days," said West Indies manager Clive Lloyd.

"Another day or two and the doctors should be able to tell us whether he will be fit to play."

Walsh sustained his injury while fielding on the final day of the third Test in Durban on Tuesday. South Africa won by nine wickets to take an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

### Russia cannot rely on Kournikova

MOSCOW, Dec 30 (Reuters/Internet): Russia's tennis hierarchy believes Anna Kournikova does not want to play for her country.

"I have serious doubts that Kournikova will play for us in Fed Cup matches next year," said Russian Tennis Federation vice-president Alexander Kalivadze. He accused the world number 13 of being unreliable in the past.

Florida-based Kournikova has missed Fed Cup duty several times. She has cited injury -- and tried the patience of the Russian authorities.

"It's either her wrist or her hand or her back," Kalivadze said. "I don't think there could have been a single part in her body that hasn't been injured when it comes to playing for Russia."

"But as soon as the next tournament on the women's circuit comes along she is healthy and playing again."

Kalivadze said he feared Kournikova's repeated absences would rule her out of future Fed Cup action, even now that the level of competition is more suited to the teenager's talents.

"We had talks with her and both of her parents last month, and although all of them said yes to us, based on my previous experience dealing with Kournikova's family -- I think it's unlikely that she will participate next year either," he said.

Kalivadze was more optimistic about Russia number two Yelena Likhovtseva, who withdrew from the national team over what she said were financial disagreements with federation officials.

"I think we can sit down together and patch up our differences," he said.

### Bates willing to be FA caretaker head

LONDON, Dec 30 (Reuters/Internet): Chelsea chairman Ken Bates is willing to be the interim head of the English Football Association (FA) if beleaguered chairman Keith Wiseman resigns or is forced out next week.

Newspapers on Tuesday quoted the straight-talking Bates as saying it would be "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the F.A." but that he was not interested in the job long-term.

"But, under pressure, I reluctantly said I would consider being caretaker chairman for 18 months to two years to see the F.A. into the next regime and push through the changes required."

The F.A. council is due to discuss Wiseman's future next week following the resignation before Christmas of chief executive Graham Kelly.

The F.A.'s executive committee has already passed a unanimous vote of no confidence in Wiseman, who has refused to quit, after an unauthorised grant or loan to the Football Association of Wales came to light.

The deal was in exchange for Welsh support for Wiseman's bid to become a FIFA vice-president and strengthen England's position in world football in connection with the country's bid to host the 2006 World Cup finals.

# Return of the wizard

MELBOURNE, Dec 30 (Reuters/AFP/Internet): Australia recalled star leg-spinner Shane Warne on Wednesday for the final Ashes Test after a surprise win for England gave the tourists a chance of levelling the series.

The world's greatest slow bowler, who has taken 313 wickets in 67 Tests, replaced novice pacerman Matthew Nicholson in the 12-man squad for the fifth Test starting in Sydney on Saturday.

"I fell like I'm starting my career all over again," said Warne, who has not appeared for Australia since shoulder surgery in May.

"I'm feeling pretty confident with my bowling, but the proof of the pudding will come next week."

Warne missed the first four Tests while he returned to first-class cricket -- without much success -- for Victoria state in Sheffield Shield matches.

He has also been caught up in one of the sport's worst scandals after news broke that he and fellow Test player Mark Waugh had taken money from a bookmaker to provide pitch and weather information during a 1994 tour of Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

After that revelation, Warne and Waugh have been summoned to appear before a Pakistani inquiry into match-fixing and bribery. The inquiry will sit in Melbourne on January 8 to hear the two cricketers, who were reluctant to travel to Pakistan.

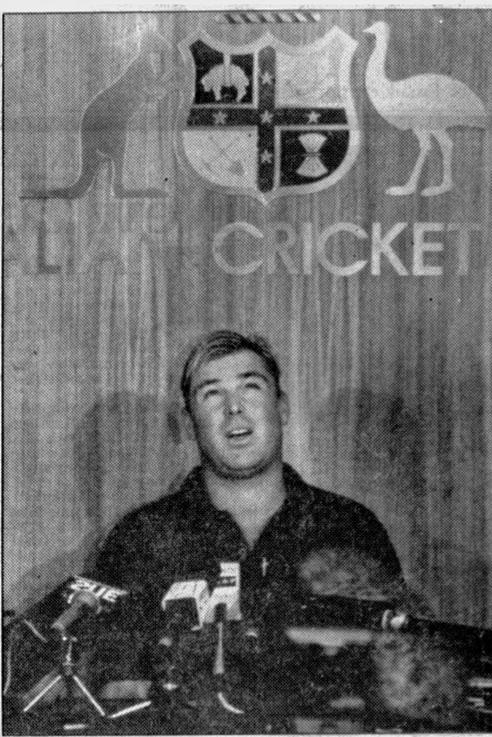
The final Test has been given extra spice by England's amazing 12-run victory in the fourth Test on Tuesday. Although Australia have retained the Ashes trophy, England could level the series at two Tests each if they win.

Nicholson, a Western Australian fast bowler, had played just seven first-class matches before being called up for the fourth Test after claiming seven English wickets in an innings during a tour match. He replaced injured pacerman Jason Gillespie.

Nicholson captured four wickets for a total of 115 runs in the two innings in the Melbourne Test and hit 14 runs.

Warne said he had been experimenting over the past six weeks to make sure that all his deliveries, including his trademark, wrong'un, were right.

"I've been experimenting in the last six weeks in the nets to



Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne, ponders before speaking during a press conference in Melbourne on December 30.

see that all my deliveries are right," he said.

And he added that his recall came the day after he found out that his wife, who is due to give birth to their second baby, in late May or early June, would be having a boy. The couple already have a girl.

"It's been a great 48 hours for me," Warne said.

Warne said he was keen to return to big-time cricket.

"To a certain extent I felt I am starting my career again, my life has been like a soap opera, like a drama the last six months. This year hasn't been one of the best, but I'm now ready to play Test cricket again."

He declared himself ready to

return to international cricket after this month's Sheffield Shield match for Victoria against New South Wales in Sydney.

Warne admitted he feared the worst during his nine-month exile from the international arena.

The most successful spinner in cricket history said he felt his career was starting again and admitted there were times he feared it might be over.

**Australian squad for fifth Test:** Mark Taylor (captain), Michael Slater, Justin Langer, Mark Waugh, Steve Waugh, Darren Lehmann, Ian Healy, Damien Fleming, Stuart McGill, Colin Miller, Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath.

### Symcox excluded

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 30: Veteran off spinner Pat Symcox was dropped from the South African team for the fourth Test against the West Indies starting at Newlands, Cape Town, Saturday, reports AFP.

All rounder Lance Klusener and left-arm wrist-spinner Paul Adams were added to the team which won the third Test by nine wickets at Kingsmead Tuesday to take an unbeatable 3-0 series lead.

"We are disappointed with Pat's bowling," said selection convenor Peter Pollock.

He denied the probable inclusion of coloured player Adams was prompted by the United Cricket Board's recent ruling that national team should include players of colour.

The UCB has the right to direct the selectors to pick black players in a series has been decided.

"We were given no instructions," said Pollock. "We simply felt that although Symcox has been a good contributor to the team, especially with his batting, he has not been upto standard with his bowling."

"Adams has not been in form but he has a good Test record and has shown the ability to take wickets at Test level."

All rounder Klusener, a key member of the team before being injured during the third Test against England in Manchester earlier this year is likely to vie with third seamer David Terbrugge for a place in the eleven.

Ashwell Prince, Western Province's coloured batsman and an outstanding fielder, will be 12th man at Newlands.

### SQUAD

Hansie Cronje (captain), Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Daryll Cullinan, Jonty Rhodes, Shaun Pollock, Mark Boucher, Lance Klusener, Allan Donald, David Terbrugge, Paul Adams 12th man, Ashwell Prince.

### None better than Gamarra

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 30: Paraguay international defender Carlos Gamarra was voted the best player of this year's Brazilian championship on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The Corinthians captain, whose team won the title last week, headed the poll of sports writers organised by the Brazilian Football Confederation.

Gamarra has been acclaimed as one of the world's best and cleanest defenders. He went through the World Cup without committing a foul in four games.

### Stewart's discontent

MELBOURNE, Dec 30: England captain Alec Stewart has called on cricket's governing body, to review its laws on playing time to avoid a repeat of Tuesday's exhausting four-hour final session of the fourth Test, reports Reuters.

England scored one of the most dramatic wins in Ashes history when they beat Australia by 12 runs.

But he said it had not been the Bureau's job to advise on whether the race should have been called off, telling Reuters: "That's not a judgment I can take".

As the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia (CYCA), organisers of the 630-nautical mile classic, and the New South Wales corner's office prepared two separate inquiries into the race, attention has focused on what weather information was available to crews.

Race organisers knew several days before the race that a low pressure zone was expected off south-eastern Australia and said that the winds it produced could help race favourite Sayonara break the race record.

Skippers were given a detailed weather assessment during the pre-race briefing on Thursday. They were warned they were in for a rough ride because a predicted "southerly buster" would see southerly winds blowing up the coast collide with a strong south-flowing current to produce big seas.

Sullivan said the Bureau upgraded its weather forecast to a gale warning three hours before the race started on Saturday, predicting southerly and south-westerly winds of 30-40 knots off the east coast and round into Bass Strait between the main-

land and the island of Tasmania.

Slightly over an hour after the start, that warning was upgraded to storm force, or Force 10 on the Beaufort scale which has a maximum Force 12.

The warning, based on computer modelling of atmospheric data, predicted a large low pressure developing overnight.

"Severe winds do occur in the Bass Strait, but that sort of development is not a common occurrence -- the long-term average would be one a year," Sullivan said.

Race organisers passed the storm warning on to competitors via a radio relay vessel which sailed with the fleet.

The storm, when it came, whipped up waves said to be as high as 10 metres (33 feet), with winds gusting at 80 knots. Six boats had to be abandoned during the race and almost two-thirds of the 115 entrants limped into New South Wales ports for shelter.

British Olympic sailor whose body has yet to be recovered despite the largest civilian maritime rescue ever mounted by Australian forces.

The dead also included three sailors from the oldest boat in the race, the solid timber cutter Winston Churchill, whose mast was driven through its keel by a single huge wave.

The CYCA inquiry is to address all safety issues including yacht and life raft design and weather forecasting.

But inquiry head Peter Bush, a veteran of 14 Sydney-Hobart races, told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio that calling the race off once the size of the storm was known would not have been easy as the fleet was already out at sea.

# Arjuna puts past behind him

PERTH, Dec 30: Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga on Tuesday defended the inclusion of controversial off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan in the squad to take on Australia and England here, reports AFP.

Muralitharan was at the centre of a bitter chucking controversy when he toured Australia three seasons ago, but on arriving to preparing for the three-nation limited-overs tournament, Ranatunga insisted the presence of the bowler was no problem.

"He has played in front of all the top umpires in the world, so it is not a big problem for us," said the skipper of the World champions.

Ranatunga admitted there had been tensions in past Sri Lanka-Australia matches but they would not influence this tour. "We have had problems with Australia, but it is all gone," he said.

"It is all history. We are just here to play cricket."

The 26-year-old Muralitharan was called for throwing by Australian umpires Darrell Hair and Ross Emerson, who said his bent elbow action was not legal.

But Ranatunga said his team were not worried about what happened during the last visit. "We are more concerned about what we are going to do on this tour to perform," he said. "That's the most important thing to us. We are here to play

and said he would call him against he considered his action had not improved. But Hair has withdrawn from Sri Lanka's matches in this season's one-day series, saying his decision was in the interests of harmony.

Muralitharan's only comment on the Australian tour was that he was looking forward to a good contest.

Muralitharan had been in doubt for this tour because of injury problems, but was declared fit late last week.

The Sri Lankans will spend the next few days practising in the nets at the WACA ground here before meeting an Australian A side in Perth Sunday in a day-night clash -- the first of three warm-up matches against a strong team of young players mostly just outside the senior national side.

**SQUAD**  
Arjuna Ranatunga (capt), Aravinda de Silva (vice-capt), Marvan Atapattu, Upul Chandana, Avishka Gunawardena, Sanath Jayasuriya, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Roshan Mahanama, Muttiah Muralitharan, Suresh Perera, Tilan Samarawera, Hashan Tillakaratne, Chaminda Vaas, Pramodya Wickramasinghe, Nuwan Zoysa.

Muralitharan made no comment about Hair's recent book "Decision Maker" in which he described Muralitharan's action as "diabolical"

good cricket and win the tournament."



Action from the final of the Copa Mercosur between Brazilian clubs Cruzeiro and Palmeiras at Sao Paulo on December 29. Palmeiras won 1-0.

# Sailors aware of the storm

SYDNEY, Dec 30 (Reuters/Internet): The severe storm which claimed six lives during last weekend's ill-fated Sydney to Hobart yacht race was a once-in-a-year phenomenon, a senior weather forecaster said on Wednesday.

Pat Sullivan, regional director of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, also said his office told race organisers of predicted Force 10 winds barely an hour after the start of the race on Saturday.

But he said it had not been the Bureau's job to advise on whether the race should have been called off, telling Reuters: "That's not a judgment I can take".

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Both Stewart and Australian captain Mark Taylor said they were unhappy at having to play for more than eight hours -- the longest day in Test history.

"Commonsense should come into it," Stewart said. "I'm sure it will be looked at by the ICC (International Cricket Council), things like when the breaks are and how long sessions should be."

Play began on Tuesday at 10.30 and did not finish until 7.33 pm playing time was eight hours three minutes compared to the normal six.

An extra half an hour had been added to the first and last sessions of each of the three days played after the opening day was washed out.

Tuesday's final session was extended even further when tea was taken early after England were dismissed in their second innings 28 minutes before the scheduled break.

More time was added on because of slow over rates, taking the final session through until 7.19 pm.

By that stage Australia were just 14 runs away from victory and the umpires, in accordance with ICC rules, offered the batsmen an extra half an hour because a result was possible.

Stewart remonstrated with umpires Daryl Harper and Steve Bucknor, arguing that his tiring bowlers had already spent more than three hours in the field in the final session.

Unfortunately for Australia their decision to bat on back-fired as England cleaned up their last three wickets for one run to complete a famous victory.

Taylor defended Australia's decision to continue but agreed with Stewart that the rules should be changed.

"I know the object of the rules is to get as much cricket played as possible but I think you've got to draw the line somewhere otherwise you'll end up starting at nine o'clock in the morning and finishing at nine o'clock at night," he said.

# Warne counts on public

MELBOURNE, Dec 30: Leg-spinner Shane Warne said Wednesday he had the support of the Australian public as he prepared to testify before a Pakistani judicial inquiry into match fixing in cricket, reports AP.

Warne will give evidence to the Pakistan commission in Melbourne on January 8 along with teammate Mark Waugh and former Australian team manager Alan Crofton.

The inquiry wants to interview Waugh and Warne after revelations of their involvement with an illegal Indian bookmaker during Australia's tour of Sri Lanka in 1994.

The pair were fined for providing pitch and weather information to the bookmaker by the Australian Cricket Board in February 1995 in action kept secret until three weeks ago.

Waugh and Warne then alleged they were offered bribes by former Pakistan captain Salim Malik during Australia's tour of Pakistan that followed Sri Lanka.

Warne said Wednesday the controversy had taken its toll but praised a "fully supportive" public.

"The last two or three weeks have been tough," he said after being recalled to the Australian side after an eight-month absence through shoulder injury.

"The public in Melbourne have been fantastic, when we (Victoria) went to the Sheffield Shield game in Sydney they were sensational."

The champion leg-spinner said he was happy to give evidence in public to the Pakistan inquiry.

"I'm happy to do whatever is required," he said. "When it actually happened in Pakistan we went straight to the people (team management) and told them what happened and that was four years ago."

"Nothing has changed since then, I'll be giving the same evidence as what I did four years ago. Let's just wait and see what the outcome is."

Warne was uncertain whether he and Waugh's involvement with the Indian bookmaker led to the alleged approach from Malik to throw a

game.

"Hopefully that's something that can be worked out," Warne said.

He said he was surprised to learn a bloc of subcontinent cricket nations -- Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka -- want he and Waugh banned for life.

The nations will lobby to that effect at an International Cricket Council meeting in New Zealand on January 10-11.

"That was a bit out of left-field," he said of reports detailing the call for life bans.

"Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, people can say whatever they want. But I don't think that (life bans) will be happening."

Warne and Waugh will also be interviewed by an independent Australian inquiry about the bookmaker controversy.

The inquiry, headed by Rob O'Regan, was established by the Australian Cricket Board and wants to interview all Australian players since 1992 and any former players with relevant information.

The O'Regan inquiry starts on January 12.

# Accepting the unexpected!

MELBOURNE, Dec 30: Shellshocked Australian cricketers pledged today to beat England in the final Test and win the Ashes series after their astonishing 12-run loss in the fourth Test, reports AFP.

England produced one of the greatest comebacks in Ashes history in precipitating a 32-for-seven collapse and bowl Australia out for 162 in a marathon 241-minute final session here Tuesday.

Australia had already locked up the Ashes for a sixth straight time, taking a 2-0 series lead into the Melbourne Test. But England resorted much-needed pride with the dramatic win and renewed hope of drawing the series at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Saturday's fifth Test.

Steve Waugh, unbeaten in both his innings, a gem 122 not out in the first and stranded on 30 as he ran out when partners in the second, is predicting a hungrier Australian side the for the SCG showdown.

The Melbourne Test "Was a game we expected to win and we were all in shock after it," Waugh said today.

"We got together for a drink and a bit of a chat, a post-mortem, and all decided that in Sydney we have got to play a lot better and be more focused, put in a good performance there and wrap up the series."

"We are really looking forward to the Test match in Sydney, it's going to be a great event, it's always a great place to play cricket. A turning wicket, it will definitely bring a result."

Australian captain Mark Taylor, who criticised the "lazy" approach of his top-order batsmen in their pursuit of what appeared a moderate 175-run target, believed the loss would do more good than harm.

"Sometimes you need to get a sting in the tail," he said. "I

think you will see that the hunger level from us is quite high in Sydney."

Australian newspapers today praised England's gritty victory, while for once turning on their complacent team.

"England rises from the Ashes," trumpeted the Melbourne Age. "The choke's on us," the Australian headlined.

"Ashes reborn in Twilight," while the tabloid Herald Sun, under a time line of dismissed Australian batsmen, chided, "A poor time to clock off, fellas."

Waugh described the Melbourne thriller as a great Test match.

They caught their catches and they made that Test match theirs. They turned it around in their favour and it was a tremendous performance."

Waugh defended the decision to seek an extra half hour's play to decide the Test in lengthening shadows on the fourth day.

"Tubby (Mark Taylor) was thinking the same way as me and that was to win the match tonight, England had been in the field for a long time, they were tired and if they came back tomorrow their bowlers would have been fresh," he said.

"We had a good partnership going, we had put on about 20 with Matthew Nicholson and that was the time to keep batting."

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The knock-out came two minutes 52 seconds into the sixth round when Veeraphol floored Tatsuyoshi for the second time in the round.

Veeraphol, 30, stepped up pressure from the third round when a straight right blow dazed Tatsuyoshi.

Veeraphol's repeated left jabs, hooks and straights drew blood from Tatsuyoshi's nose in the fourth round, and he remained on the offensive.

With Tatsuyoshi bleeding from the nose and right eyelid Veeraphol floored the Japanese with a lightning left punch two minutes and 25 seconds into the sixth round.