

Sport

Central contracts for England cricketers

LONDON, May 4 (Reuters): England Test cricketers could be given six-month 'central contracts' if the recommendations of a report released on Tuesday are adopted.

'Lazio can win everything'

ROME, May 5: Lazio may be only one point clear in the Serie A, but coach Sven Goran Eriksson claimed on Wednesday that nothing can keep his men from glory in Italy and Europe this month, reports AFP.

Lazio lead AC Milan in the championship with three matches to go, and face Spain's Real Mallorca in the last European Cup Winners' Cup final in Birmingham on May 19.

Two consecutive defeats here last month had raised fears that Lazio were heading for yet another end of season collapse.

WC 2002 in Spain on Via Digital

MADRID, May 5: Spanish company Via Digital has won exclusive broadcast rights for transmission of World Cup 2002 matches in Spain, a company spokesman announced here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Controlled by the Telefonica telecommunications group, Via Digital have reached an agreement with football's international governing body FIFA to exclusively broadcast the 64 World Cup matches throughout Spain.

World Cup 2002 is being jointly hosted by Japan and South Korea.

Via Digital have also secured the broadcast rights for the 1999 Confederation Cup in Mexico and the first refusal for future World Cup championship club matches which will be organised by FIFA.

The 1998 World Cup was broadcast in Spain by TVE, the state television service.

Pollock the Pillager



JOHANNESBURG, April 30 (AFP): Shaun Pollock will have a point to prove when he spearheads South Africa's bowling attack in the World Cup.

His return to England will take the red-haired all-rounder back to the country where he endured one of the most frustrating periods of an otherwise glittering career.

Going into the fifth and final Test against England last year, Pollock had taken only ten wickets despite beating the bat frequently. "I stopped trying to count how many times the batsmen played and missed," he recalls.

Pollock finished the series by taking eight wickets at Headingley, Leeds, but personal joy was outweighed by disappointment as England clinched a series which South Africa had seemed set to win.

Pollock, 25, learned patience from last year's travails. "Sometimes you have to wait for things to happen," he says.

That the experience was not traumatic was shown during an outstanding 1998/99 season. He was the main destroyer of the West Indies, taking 29 wickets in the Test series as South Africa swept to a 5-0 triumph.

He topped the bowling in the one-day series as well, as South Africa won 6-1, and took most wickets in both the Tests and one-day games as South Africa continued their winning ways during a tour of New Zealand.

Pollock reached the milestones of 1,000 runs and 100 wickets in both Tests and limited overs international cricket during the season.

The Test mark was reached in his 26th match. Only three players, headed by England's Ian Botham, had done it in fewer. When he achieved the one-day double, though, he nudged Botham from the top of the list, having played only 68 games to Botham's 75.

Although Pollock is a fluent stroke-player, his batting has taken second place to his bowling in the past year. Although frequently dubbed the leading all-rounder in world cricket, Pollock says he thinks the label is used too freely.

"I don't know if I would be picked if I could not bowl... the genuine all-rounder can be picked for batting or bowling."

With last year's experience in England behind him - "I don't want any mental blocks" - Pollock will be concentrating on causing problems for opening batsmen at the World Cup.

As Allan Donald is likely to be held back by the middle overs, Pollock carries the twin responsibilities of taking wickets and keeping the scoring rate down in the early phases, when fielding restrictions invite batsmen to attack.

It is a role Pollock has managed with remarkable success. His 103 one-day wickets have been taken at just over 23 runs each, while he has conceded fewer than four runs an over.

The son of former Test-fast bowler Peter and nephew of acclaimed batsman Graeme Pollock can scale further cricketing heights. He led a young South African team to a gold medal triumph over a full-strength Australian side at the Commonwealth Games in Malaysia last year and has been made vice-captain and Hansie Cronje's heir-apparent in the South African team.



Shaun Pollock... versatile genius. - Star file photo

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Seemingly different seam

HOVE, England, May 4 (Reuters/Internet): South Africa's top two fast bowlers, Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock, believe the World Cup will not be dominated by seam bowlers to the extent that many players have predicted - and the reason is the seam itself.

Speaking after the team's first practice session in Hove on Tuesday, both men said they were convinced that the Dukes ball to be used in the tournament had been altered in design and was now held together with a smaller seam than in the past.

"It is definitely a bit smaller and quite different from all the other Dukes balls I've ever seen. I think they might have done it to get higher-scoring games because there has been some criticism of the ball in the early stages of a game," Donald said.

The South African team usually play with the Australian-made Kookaburra ball, which has a larger seam than the English-made Dukes ball, but in the seven one-day matches against the West Indies earlier this year they used the Dukes ball as practice for the World Cup.

"Also the weather in the early part of the season means there'll be moisture in the pitches to give the seamers even more assistance. Certainly when we played the West Indies it was darting all over the place

ing too much in the first 15 overs," Pollock said.

South African coach Bob Woolmer agreed that the ball looked significantly different. There was concern and some adverse comment on the size of the seam before so maybe they've taken the decision to reduce it," Woolmer said.

Managing Director of Dukes, Dilip Jajodia, admitted from the company's headquarters in Canterbury that the World Cup ball was different but denied that the change had been made specifically for the tournament.

"Isn't it amazing how sensitive these chaps are? They notice the slightest change. Most of the countries taking part asked us to send them balls and because of differing conditions the thread we use in them has to be harder wearing," Jajodia said.

"For balls sent overseas we use a linen thread as opposed to a cotton thread used on balls in England but as far as we are concerned the difference should be minimal."

Margas said: "Now the only thing I hope for is to have a good Copa America and to prepare myself psychologically and physically."

Margas has started physical training with the fitness trainer of the Chilean national team Italo Traverso with a view to getting fit for the Copa America in Paraguay.

Crawley reminds Scotland

LONDON, May 5: Steve Crawley, not picked by Scotland for the World Cup, scored a century in a nine-wicket NatWest Trophy first round victory at Lillington on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Crawley took out his frustration on a Nottinghamshire County Board XI with an unbeaten 109 that steered the Scots through to a second round tie at home to Dorset.

Seamer Craig Wright and spinner Gregor Maiden restricted Nottinghamshire to 212 from 50 overs and Crawley's maiden century - which included a six and 14 fours - saw the Scots home at 215 for one.

Ireland won by five wickets against Northumberland at Jesmond. Northumberland made 253 for eight - man-of-the-match Dwayne McGerrigle taking five for 66 from his 10 overs - and Neil Carson (58) and Kyle McCallan (41) steered the Irish past their target at 255 for eight.

Denmark's debut in the competition proved short-lived as they were beaten by 58 runs by the Kent Board XI at Maidstone.

Turin recalls the day

TURIN, May 5: The city of Turin paid homage to one of its greatest football teams with a memorial match here Tuesday to commemorate the Torino team that was wiped out in a plane crash 50 years ago, reports AFP.

A match that saw a Torino team face a Serie A all-star line-up ended 1-1 in a fitting tribute to the team.

Aldo Agropoli, who played for Torino and Italy in the 1970s best summed up the match when he said: "This evening Torino belongs to the whole of Italy."

Ronaldinho (Inter Milan and Brazil), George Weah (AC Milan and Liberia), Luigi Di Biagio (AS Roma and Italy), Roberto Baggio (Inter Milan and Italy), Filippo Inzaghi (Juventus and Italy) and Hidetoshi Nakata (Perugia and Japan) were some of the star names on show to honour the team known as the "granata" (garnet-coloured).

Torino currently second in Serie B are close to a return to Serie A after three years in the wilderness.

It would be a fitting tribute to the team that perished in the crash on Superga hill on May 4, 1949.

It was on a rainy and foggy afternoon that, at 17:05, a Fiat G212 piloted by Lieutenant Colonel Pierluigi Meroni, carrying 31 people including 18 players, crashed at the foot of the Superga Basilica 5 kilometres from the centre of town on the way back from a friendly match with Benfica in Lisbon.

Margas to return to West Ham

SANTIAGO, May 5: Chilean international defender Javier Margas said Tuesday that he will return in August to English Premiership side West Ham United, rejecting reports that he would quit professional football, reports AFP.

Margas, one of Chile's star players in the 1998 World Cup, said he would carry on playing for the London side if there was no offer from Chile or Latin America that would satisfy West Ham, who paid two million pounds (three million dollars) for his services to Universidad Catolica.

Margas said: "I will finish my contract with West Ham which lasts four years."

The defender's family failed to settle in the English capital. When he first returned to Santiago, Margas said he would not return to England, initiating talks with his former club Colo Colo for a loan deal.

It was furthermore reported that he would quit the game if he failed to find a club in Latin America.

Margas said: "Now the only thing I hope for is to have a good Copa America and to prepare myself psychologically and physically."

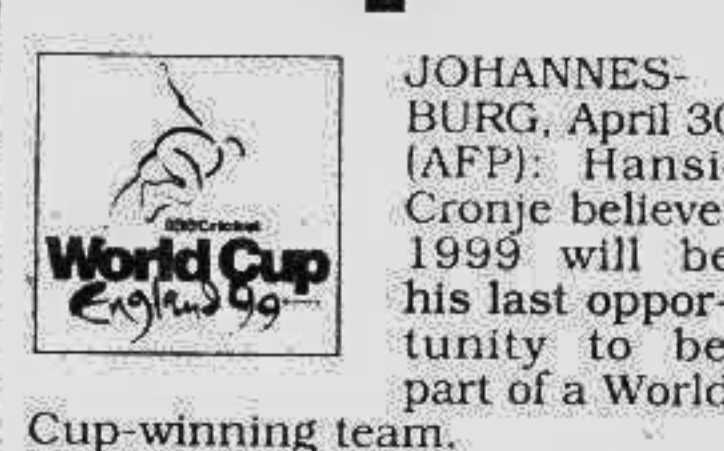
Margas has started physical training with the fitness trainer of the Chilean national team Italo Traverso with a view to getting fit for the Copa America in Paraguay.

Bailey not yet ready

TORONTO, May 5: Olympic 100m champion Donovan Bailey is not yet ready to start competition since he injured his Achilles tendon while playing football last year, the Toronto Sun said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

His coaches had hoped he would have been able to compete last weekend in Texas in a relay with the Canadian team, but Bailey had to pull out.

Captain Competent



JOHANNESBURG, April 30 (AFP): Hansie Cronje believes 1999 will be his last opportunity to be part of a World Cup-winning team.

"We have a realistic chance this year and I don't think I'll be around in 2003," says the 29-year-old South African captain.

Cronje already ranks as one of the most successful one-day cricketers in history and has built a phenomenal record as captain, leading his team to 80 wins and only 26 defeats in 109 matches.

He admits, though, that his crowning ambition is to win the World Cup.

It will be Cronje's third crack at the only official world championship in cricket.

In 1992, he was a rookie in the South African team that reached the semi-finals in Australia and New Zealand in the country's first tournament after re-admission to international cricket.

In 1996, he was bitterly disappointed when he led South Africa on a rampage through the round-robin stage, in Pakistan, only to slip up at the first knock-out hurdle in a quarter-final match against the West Indies in Karachi.

Cronje epitomises the all-action style of the South African team.

Supremely fit, he had to cut down on road running when he started to have knee trouble. Instead, he swims for an hour

or more on non-playing days to go with his daily gym workouts.

He is the iron man of international cricket and has only missed five of South Africa's 164 one-day games - the first three against India in 1991, one during the 1992 World Cup when he was not picked and just one through injury, in Sri Lanka in 1993, when he had a sore back.

He starts the upcoming tournament as South Africa's leading one-day run-scorer with 4,825 at an average just under 40. He became the 16th player in history to complete the limited overs 'double' when he took his 100th wicket during the recent tour of New Zealand.

Cronje believes every ball and every run are potentially vital in one-day cricket. As a batsman he seeks to capitalise on every run-scoring opportunity.

A powerful hitter, especially against spin bowlers, he likes to club over mid-wicket and could have improved on his tally of two centuries and might have had a higher average if he had not sacrificed his wicket on several occasions trying to increase the tempo in the late overs of an innings.

Aggressive running between the wickets is a trademark of Cronje's and the South African team, but it is one area where the captain feels they can improve in order to squeeze out extra runs.

Cronje is a canny medium-pace bowler but, because of his troublesome left knee, he often turns to his other all-rounders.

Within the confines of one-day tactics, Cronje has shown an ability to switch strategy within a game, as when he instructed his fast bowlers to bowl short against the West Indies in Durban this year.

They risked being no-balled for deliveries lifting above shoulder height but it caused sufficient disruption to the batsmen for South Africa to snatch victory from looming defeat.

Cronje's World Cup tactics will be watched closely. He has said South Africa will aim to win every match - but he will need to carefully marshal his resources to enable the side to peak for the knock-out stages.

SA in injury soup

LONDON, May 5: With the unpredictable English weather relenting, the Indian team for the World Cup is going full steam ahead at the nets, even as South Africa, its opening match rival, has reported three players including speedster Alan Donald on the injured list, reports PTL.

South Africa's bowling mainstay Donald is reported to be suffering from stomach cramps, ace fielder Jonty Rhodes has a wrist injury and all-rounder Lance Klusener is down with a foot injury barely 10 days before their first match against India at Hove on May 15.

South African coach Bob Woolmer said yesterday he wanted to involve all 15 of his World Cup squad in the three warm up games against Sussex, Kent and Middlesex before taking a decision about their fitness.

Their participation in these warm-up games would prove their fitness in time for the

opening match against India, "Woolmer was quoted as saying by the local media.

In contrast, the Indians have no such worries as all members of the squad are fit and are going into the warm-up matches with full vigour after losing the first couple of days due to inclement weather.

"The boys are shaping well with morale high after strenuous weeklong practice," coach Anshuman Gaekwad said after the team's easy win in two friendly matches - their unofficial warmup games - at Leicester, about 200 kms from here.

The players are in good shape. We have no injuries or mishaps. Gaekwad said, quelling rumours back home of star batsman Sachin Tendulkar having suffered an ankle fracture.

The coach said Tendulkar was present during the second warm-up friendly against a local club in Leicester on Monday.

"Though we had rested him (Tendulkar) instead playing Ramesh, he was present throughout the match with me

and was taking full part in nets and physical workouts along with the whole squad," Gaekwad said describing his biggest asset as fighting fit.

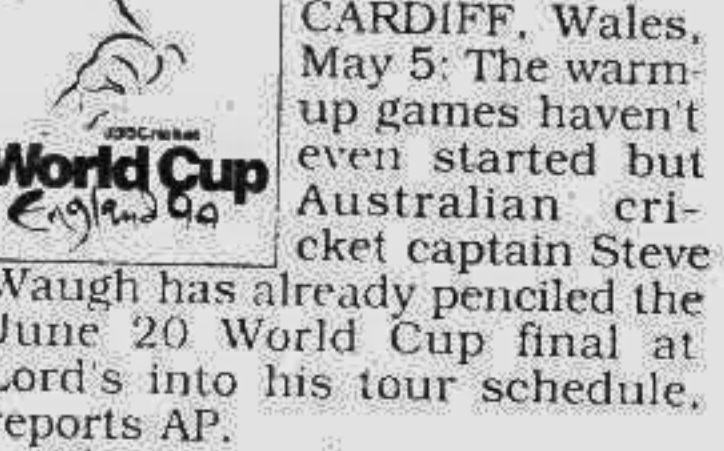
"The weather has changed, so we can practice longer outdoors. With temperatures hovering between 18 and 22 Celsius, it is comparatively warmer and the boys feel more like home," the coach said.

Regarding the injuries in the rival camp, Gaekwad, not wishing to dwell on any weaknesses in the opposition camp openly, said: "We are concentrating on our own game plan, anything else is a bonus."

Asked how Tendulkar's back was holding on, the coach said: "The very fact that the player is participating in nets and physical build-up should answer the question."

"We rotate the pattern, sometimes we concentrate on fielding, sometimes on bowling and on other occasions on catching and fielding," Gaekwad said.

Steve extremely upbeat



CARDIFF, Wales, May 5: The warm-up games haven't even started but Australian cricket captain Steve Waugh has already pencilled in the Lord's 20 World Cup final at Lord's into his tour schedule, reports AP.

The Australians, losing finalists to Sri Lanka in 1996, are among the favourites to win the 1999 tournament and while the South Africans and Pakistan have avoided the favourites tag, Waugh is happy to take it.

"I don't mind being favourite because it shows you're the form side," he said Wednesday.

"Winning the 1987 World Cup was the highlight of my career and I'm really looking forward to the opportunity of playing at Lord's - it'll be a tremendous feeling to win two World Cups."

The 33-year-old batsman said the Australian squad was the most well-balanced he's involved within 15 years of first-class cricket.

"We cover every option with this squad, there's nothing that can happen on the field that we can't cover, so it's really up to us to do it on the day," he said.

"Our training has been excellent and I think we've a pretty good chance."

The Australians arrived Tuesday in Cardiff after a drama-plagued tour of the West Indies, where they tied both the Test and limited-over series.

The tour was marred by crowd riots at two games, with Waugh saying he feared for his life when spectators threw bottles and trash onto the field and stormed the pitch.

But the Australian skipper said he was more concerned about winning another World Cup than reflecting on the trouble in the West Indies.

The squad is packed with potential match winners, including Michael Bevan - recently

rated as the World's No 1 limited-over player - plus fast bowler Glenn McGrath, leading batsmen Mark and Steve Waugh and spin bowler Shane Warne.

Waugh, who along with all-rounder Tom Moody is the only remaining member of Australia's 1987 World Cup winning team, said the Aussies were treating the World Cup as the 'holy grail' of cricket.

"We've been building up to this for the last 18 months - it's the ultimate for any one-day cricketer," he said.

The Australians have warm-up matches against Glamorgan, Worcestershire and Somerset before starting their World Cup campaign against Scotland in Edinburgh on May 16.

"We're peaking at the right time, which I think we did in 1987," Waugh said. "We were underdogs then, but we played good cricket leading up to it and I think we're in the same frame of mind here."

Warne, who was controversially dropped from the Australian Test team for the final match in the West Indies, said he was returning to his best form and enjoyed playing in the English conditions.

"I got dropped for the final test but I thought my bowling was okay and it was only a matter of time before the wickets came," he said.

TRACK RECORD

LONDON, April 30 (AFP): South Africa's World Cup track record: 1975-1987 Barred from tournament due to apartheid regime 1987-1996: Played 15, won 10, and lost 5 Semi-finalists: 1992 Eliminated before semi-finals: 1996 1992 Played 9, won 5, lost 4 Preliminary round Sydney, February 26 - South Africa bt Australia by 9 wks. Australia 170-9 (Donald 3-34), South Africa 171-1 (Wessels 81 not out) Auckland, February 29 - New Zealand bt South Africa by 7 wks. South Africa 190-7 (Kirsten 90), New Zealand 191-3 (Greatbatch 68, Latham 60) Wellington, March 2 - Sri Lanka bt South Africa by 3 wks. South Africa 195 (Anurath 3-41), Sri Lanka 198-7 (Mahanama 68, Ranatunga 64 not out, Donald 3-42) Christchurch, March 5 - South Africa bt West Indies by 64 runs. South Africa 200-8 (Kirsten 56), West Indies 136 (Logie 61, Pringle 4-11) Brisbane, March 8 - South Africa bt Pakistan by 20 runs. South Africa 211-7 (Hudson 54), Pakistan 173-8 (after set 193 in 36, Kuiper 3-40) Canberra, March 10 - South Africa bt Zimbabwe by 7 wks. Zimbabwe 163 (McMillan 3-30, Kirsten 3-31), South Africa 164-3 (Wessels 70, Kirsten 62 not out) Melbourne, March 12 - England bt South Africa by 3 wks. South Africa 236-4 (Wessels 85, Hudson 79), England 226-7 (after set 225 in 41 overs, Stewart 77, Fairbrother 75 not out, Snell 3-42) Adelaide, March 15 - South Africa bt India by 6 wks. India 180-6 (Azharuddin 79), South Africa 181-4 (Hudson 53, Kirsten 84) Semifinal Sydney, March 22 - England bt South Africa by 20 runs. England 252-6 (45 overs, Hick 83), South Africa 232-6 (after set 252 in 43

TRACK RECORD

overs) 1996 Played 6, won 5, lost 1 Group matches Rawalpindi, Pakistan, February 16 - South Africa bt United Arab Emirates by 169 runs. South Africa 321-2 (Kirsten 188 not out, Cronje 57), United Arab Emirates 152-8 (Donald 3-21, McMillan 8-1-11-3) Faisalabad, Pakistan, February 20: South Africa bt New Zealand by 5 wks. New Zealand 177 (Donald 3-34), South Africa 178-5 (Cronje 78) Rawalpindi, Pakistan, February 25 - South Africa bt England by 78 runs. South Africa 230 (Martin 3-33), England 152 Karachi, February 29 - South Africa bt Pakistan by 5 wks. Pakistan 242-6 (Aamir Sohail 111), South Africa 243-5 (Cullinan 65, Waqar Younis 3-50) Rawalpindi, Pakistan, March 5 - South Africa bt Holland by 160 runs. South Africa 328-3 (Kirsten 83, Hudson 161), Holland 168-8 Quarterfinals Karachi, March 11 - West Indies bt South Africa by 19 runs. West Indies 264-8 (Chanderpaul 56, Lara 111), South Africa 245 (Hudson 54, Cullinan 69, Harper 4-47, Adams 3-53) AGAINST OTHERS v Australia: Played 1, won 1 (1992) v England: Played 3, won 1 (1996), lost 2 (1992 x2) v India: Played 1, won 1 (1992) v New Zealand: Played 2, won 1 (1996), lost 1 (1992) v Pakistan: Played 2, won 2 (1992, 1996) v Sri Lanka: Played 1, lost 1 (1992) v West Indies: Played 2, won 1 (1992), lost 1 (1996) v Zimbabwe: Played 1, won 1 (1992) Others: v UAE: Played 1, won 1 (1996), v Holland: Played 1, won 1 (1996)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 34 Lip lids 23 Lustrous black 35 Carousal 36 Unaus abbr. 24 Far rock 4 Put your foot in your mouth 1 Catcalls 25 Waste no time 8 Snail-like Kappa 2 - Kleine 26 Bread spread 12 Lubricant bygone 3 Popular Nachtmusik 3 A Baldwin 27 Container for 28 Down 13 - Camera 45 Prima donna Angels, eg. 28 Exploitation worshiper 46 Exam format 5 Harangues 6 Old Testa- 29 Turn blue? 15 Inseparable 47 Summary dismissal 7 Entrance ment book 31 Twist out of shape 16 Difficulty 48 Louis XIV's self- 9 California 32 Grand-scale 17 Praiseful verses 49 Streamlet 10 Oil org. 34 "Flying Down to -" 21 Apr. 50 Card-table 11 Sagacious cry 19 Witt's 35 Pasta variety 22 Reason to say "alas" 52 Laddies' 20 Plagiarize 36 Type size 37 Choir rendition 38 Brainchild 39 Don Corleone 40 Author Hunter 41 Melody 42 Alger's "before" 43 Maze goal 44 Take care of

Cryptogram puzzle grid and solution: P T W K P Z A P S H M W S Z P L P S B H X W B K : " O ' Q P H P P L A W Q O L M K A P K A F D P X N D F T O N ! " Yesterday's Cryptogram: IN PRISON ART STUDIOS, I GUESS ONE IS APT TO FIND FINGER PRINTS. Today's Cryptogram clue: D equals M The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.