

Sport

Pom' Mbangwa

HARARE, May 7 (Reuters): Pace bowler Mpumelelo Mbangwa was instrumental in helping Zimbabwe to their first Test victory abroad but he will be looking to the World Cup to cement his place in the national team.

The 22-year-old Mbangwa took three wickets in each innings as Zimbabwe beat Pakistan by seven wickets last November but he has still been



unable to lay claim to a regular place in the side.

With the highly-rated Heath Streak and Eddie Brades likely to be automatic choices, the third pace bowling selection looks to rest with Mbangwa and Henry Olonga, the first black to play for Zimbabwe.

Officials describe the lanky Mbangwa, known as 'Pom' by his teammates, as one of Zimbabwe's most promising young bowlers.

"He is coming through, but there is still some work to be done. I would like to see him running in with a little more energy every time he plays but he has great potential," said Zimbabwe World Cup coach David Houghton, a former captain.

Born in western Zimbabwe, in a family of five children, Mbangwa started playing cricket at 10 and won a place in the school team at 11. He later represented Zimbabwean schools and graduated into the provincial Matabeleland team where he became a regular.

Mbangwa said the greatest influence on his career has been his school house-master Ian Kemp, who has helped him groom his bowling action.

He has also attended coaching courses in England, India and South Africa, under former Test players Clive Rice, Dennis Lillee and Hylton Ackerman.

"The one reservation many people have about his bowling is that it is a little short of top pace, but Pom sees himself primarily as a line-and-length bowler who relies on seam and swing, with the away-swinger his stock ball," said Zimbabwe Cricket Union official John Ward.

Mbangwa says he is aware of his shortcomings and will work harder to become a premier bowler.

"I am not complacent just because I have been selected for the squad. I am working even harder to lift my play," he said recently.

Fellow paceman Streak said: "He has a good future although he probably still needs a couple of yards of extra pace."

Troussier gives Nakata the summer off

TOKYO, May 7: Japan's elderly midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata can look forward to a long summer holiday, according to national coach Philippe Troussier, reports Reuters.

The 22-year-old Perugia playmaker is unlikely to be selected for Japan's Copa America squad or for the first round of Sydney Olympic qualifying games, says the Frenchman.

"He has had a very good season in Italy and is very busy and very tired," said Troussier.

"I would like to give him a good holiday and time to prepare for next season, because in Italy if you lose the preparation, your season is finished."

Japan's Olympic qualifying schedule kicks off in Hong Kong next month with games against the Philippines, Nepal, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The teams then return to Tokyo to play a second round robin.

Coach Dave Houghton, the country's former captain and their highest aggregate run scorer in World Cup matches with 567, believes his team can now compete against the best.

"I do not think we can still be considered as just making up the numbers at the World Cup because we are now more experienced," he told Reuters.

"In our first two World Cups (in 1983 and 1987) we were not even a test side but we have had a lot of experience since then."

"We have won about 60 per cent of our one-day matches in the last 12 months and our players have matured a lot. I expect the team to do well."

In the last World Cup three years ago, Zimbabwe won

Heath the hunter



HARARE, May 7 (AFP): Hunting is in Heath Streak's blood. Before he became an international strike bowler, he shot big game for a living.

Today, when he is not on the cricket pitch, he is running a hunting operation in the wilds of Zimbabwe's Matabeleland.

Streak is one of those sporting anomalies: a huge talent in a small team.

Had he been born elsewhere, he might have become the stuff of legend.

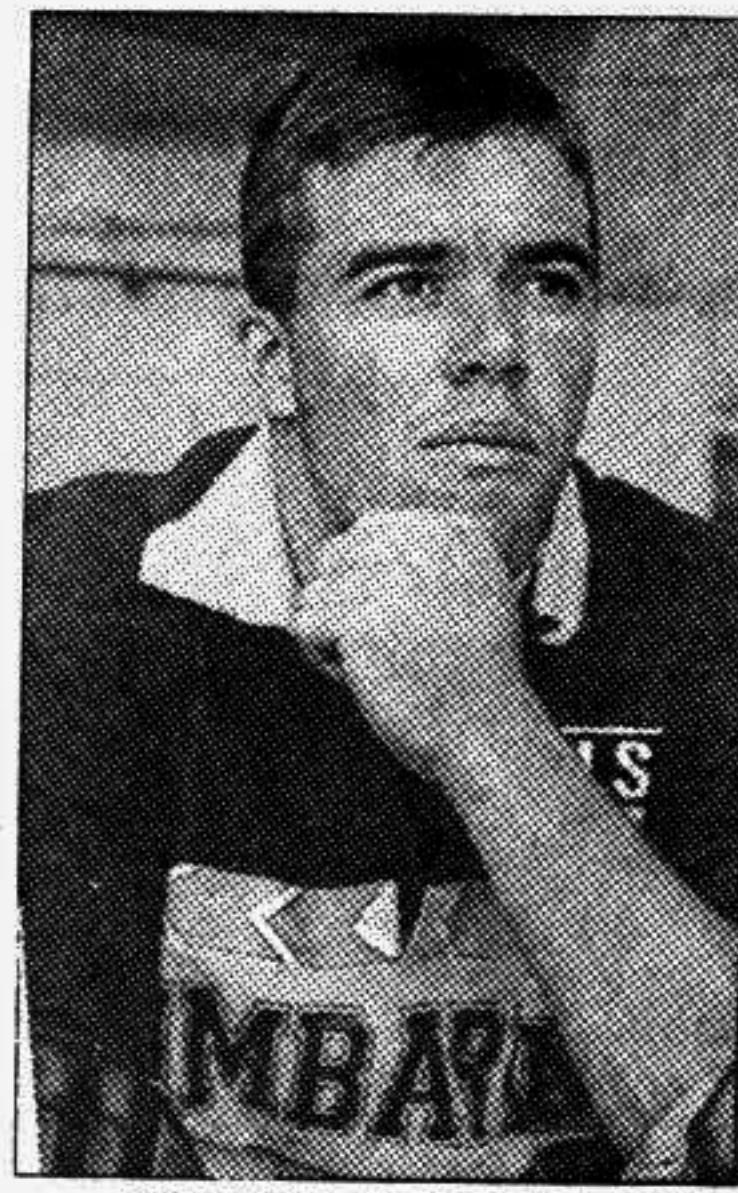
Zimbabwe, however, while growing in stature, remains a cricketing backwater.

Fast aggressive bowling is natural to him and he has been the spearhead with various partners of the Zimbabwe attack in recent years.

When Zimbabwe first entered the Test arena in 1992 he immediately made a name for himself, appearing third at one stage in the world bowling ratings.

But that could not last and over the past two years or so he has lost his edge, partly due to a recurring ankle injury.

The Zimbabwe selectors are



HEATH STREAK

taking something of a risk sending him to England but they feel it is worth it because of his wicket taking potential and aggressive, accurate bowling in short bursts.

He was taking a wicket for every 21 runs three years ago but since then his figures have slipped considerably. Maybe he

is no longer the terror of international class batsmen but his varied attack makes them wary of taking him on nevertheless.

Part of the blame for loss of impact might lie in his spell with Hampshire in England, when he was used extensively as a strike bowler and this might have run him down.

But at the age of 25 he still has most of his career before him and he could well make a dramatic comeback.

One of Streak's assets is his ability to score rapidly and occasionally heavily from number seven or eight position and it would not be surprising if he went in at five or six if the situation demanded rapid runs after a good start.

During one school year he finished with an average of 300, having been dismissed only once. His lifetime best score is 184 in a club match.

Streak has taken 89 wickets in one-day international matches at an average of 30.01 with a best performance of 5-32. With the bat he has scored 809 runs for an average of just over 21. He also has 106 Test wickets and is the only bowler in Test history outside the Indian sub-continent to take 40 Test wickets before his 21st birthday.

Sachin fails to shine

LEICESTER, England, May 7: Sachin Tendulkar, back in action after nine weeks out injured, flopped as India opened their World Cup warm-up campaign with an unimpressive batting display against English county side Leicestershire, reported AFP.

Tendulkar, regarded as the world's best batsman but on the sidelines with a back injury since early March, was dismissed for four as India struggled to 219 for seven off 50 overs here today.

The Indian bowlers were however denied a chance to show their form as heavy rain during the break forced the match to be abandoned.

India, who open their World Cup campaign against favourites South Africa at Hove on May 15, play two more warm-up matches against Yorkshire on Sunday and Nottinghamshire on Tuesday.

Rahul Dravid top-scored with 60 and vice-captain Ajay Jadeja boosted the lower order with an unbeaten 54 after Mohammad Azharuddin elected to take first strike in overcast conditions.

Tendulkar and opening partner Saurav Ganguly were both back in the pavilion before the total had reached 20, but Dravid and Azharuddin then added 95 for the third wicket. Azharuddin hit a fluent 43.

The lower order, however, failed to force up the run-rate. Robin Singh, Nayan Mongia and Ajit Agarkar all fell cheaply, before Jadeja took the Indians past the 200-run mark.

India are in group A, which also comprises South Africa, England, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

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In 1997 he joined Kent for the English season until Carl Hooper of West Indies became available. He had reasonable success but it was a wet summer and the pitches did not suit him.

Strang is known for spending long hours at the nets practising many different kinds of delivery and he is fine close-in fielder on the leg side.

Coach David Houghton rates him the fourth best leg spinner in the world and says "we are very lucky to have him".

Strang's ODI career record is 79 wickets for 2,364 runs, giving him an average of 29.92. With the bat he has scored 955, averaging 25.13, excellent for a number eight. He also has 57 Test wickets to his credit and 747 Test runs at 27.66.

Paul Strang can also bat well and in one Test against Pakistan, with Zimbabwe in trouble at 142-6, he partnered Grant Flower against Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis and ended up with a stubborn century.

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Set among a maze of hockey pitches in a man-made forest on the edge of Amsterdam, the ground of former Dutch league champion VRA is being spruced up for the arrival of 4,000 fans on May 26.

"We have to turn a small pitch into a stadium fit for the World Cup," Wilts added. Temporary stands are being built as well as hospitality tents for visiting dignitaries as Dutch cricket prepares to show itself off to the world — but not to the Dutch sides.

This would be a great opportunity to raise the profile of the game here, but while the South Africa-Kenya match is being broadcast to countries all over the world, it will not be televised in the Netherlands."

The lack of local interest probably stems from the absence of the Dutch team, which failed to qualify for the World Cup — after the decision had been made to host a match here. The Dutch played in the 1996 World Cup but lost all five matches. "We were unlucky," Wilts insisted.

Under current coach, West Indian Emerson Trotman, the Dutch national team has developed into a side strong enough to be crowned European champions last season, beating Denmark, Ireland and World Cup contenders Scotland on its way to the title.

The national team also has picked up a few memorable scalps in its history, including beating Bobby Simpson's Australian side in 1964, bowling out the Van Richards-led West Indies for 129 in a five-wicket one-day victory in 1991 and beating South Africa by nine wickets in 1994.

"We are realistic and we have

no ambitions to win. However,

for the first time we are here as

participants. We want to win

more than one game and are

targeting a place in the super

six," said Campbell.

"They will be hard to beat at home but this is a very wide open World Cup. I think any of the top nine teams are capable of beating each other."

Last time the side met England coach David Lloyd courted controversy, claiming England had "murdered" their hosts after a drawn Test in Harare.

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