

Pom' Mbangwa

HARARE, May 7 (Reuters): Pace bowler Mupfema 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 Eddo Brandes likely to be automatic choices, the third pace bowling selection looks to rest between 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 Matebeleland 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-swinging 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.

Follow 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 Italy-based 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 league.

The biennial Copa America, to which the Japanese national team have been invited for the first time, will be held in Paraguay from June 29 to July 18.

"I think it's 90 per cent that Nakata won't play in Hong Kong, 95 per cent he won't play in the Copa America," Troussier told Japan's Daily Yomiuri newspaper.

"I don't want to disturb Nakata, and it also gives me the opportunity to look at other players."

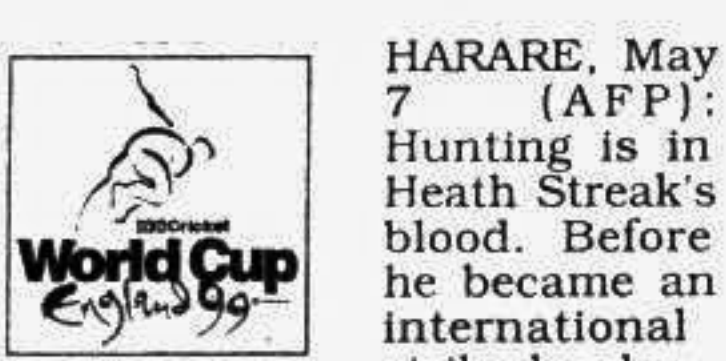
"I need to have many situations because I cannot focus my strategy only on Nakata; that is a big mistake."

"I have good youngsters in Japan with good potential, and I can use these players three, four or five days before a match. With Nakata, he comes back just one day before a match and this is terrible for me."

The Serie A season ends May 23, after which Nakata is expected to play for Japan against Belgium and Peru in the three-nation Kirin Cup in Tokyo and Yokohama early next month. After that, Troussier says he can have a break.

"I prefer him to have a good holiday: go to the beach, sun, swim, and after that go to prepare for the new season... with Juventus or Manchester United," he added, in reference to where Nakata could be playing if a big money transfer materialises at the end of the season.

Heath the hunter



HEATH STREAK

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.

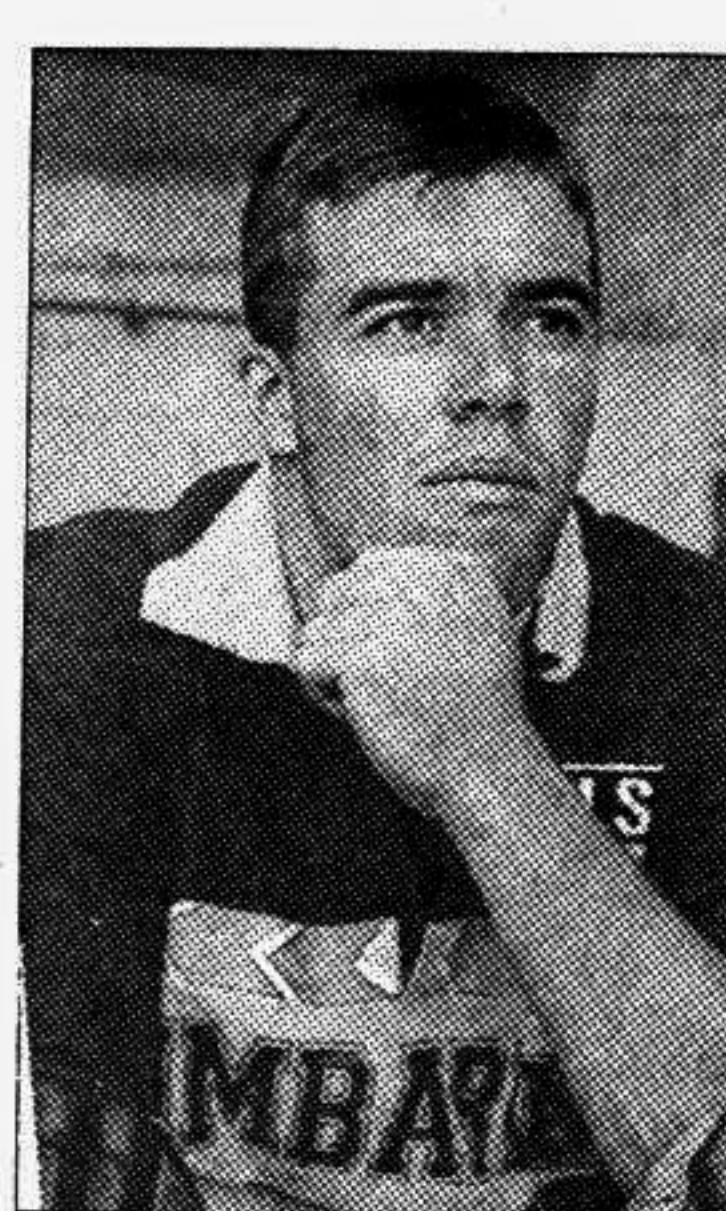
Zimbabwe, however, while growing in stature, remains a cricketing backwater.

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



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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 subcontinent 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, reports 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 Shreevatsa 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.

Dutch dream comes true

AMSTELVEEN, May 6 (AP): World Cup organisers were hardly spoilt for choice when looking for a Dutch cricket ground to host the Group A tie between South Africa and Kenya — there are only two pitches in the country with a grass wicket.

"The trouble is that the wickets are always on soccer or field hockey pitches," said Jan Wilts, Dutch organiser of the first World Cup match ever to be played on continental Europe. "And the amount of attention soccer and hockey clubs pay to our needs is zero."

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 themselves.

"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 Ennesford Trosman, 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 a famous 1964 Test victory over the Viv Richards-led West Indies for 129 in a five-wicket one-day victory in 1991 and beating South Africa by nine wickets in 1994.

Pakistan turn to Mushtaq



MUSHTAQ MOHAMMAD

KARACHI, May 7 (Reuters/Internet): Pakistan recalled former Test captain Mushtaq Mohammad as head coach on Friday just a week before the start of the cricket World Cup.

The appointment ends a frantic two weeks for Pakistan cricket in which Javed Miandad resigned as coach after disputes with senior players and assistant coach Sarfraz Nawaz was dropped.

"I'm very happy Pakistan has a former captain and a former coach to lead us in the World Cup," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Khalid Mahmood told the news agency from Lahore.

Mushtaq, who has coached Pakistan twice in the last four years, replaces Miandad who shocked Pakistan by resigning on April 21, just days before the squad left for England.

Mushtaq, who lives in the English town of Birmingham, will begin his duties on Saturday when Pakistan play their first warm-up match against Derbyshire at Derby, Mahmood said.

"I just talked to him half an hour ago and everything is in order," Mahmood said.

In the immediate aftermath of Miandad's departure the Pakistan Cricket Board had said

captain Wasim Akram had been given sweeping powers on and off the field for the World Cup.

But Mahmood said on Friday Wasim and team manager Zafar Alfaz backed the appointment of Mushtaq, who will be coach only for the World Cup.



MUSHTAQ MOHAMMAD

"All relevant people have been consulted and support the decision," Mahmood said.

He said team morale was high despite the recent distractions. Pakistan having won the three-team Sharjah competition against England and India last month.

"Preparations are going well. The team is training strongly. The cloud was more on us, on

the cricket board, than on the team. I understand the team is busy preparing very well," he said.

Mushtaq's appointment comes less than a week after the PCB executive council accepted Miandad's resignation and dropped the controversial Sarfraz as bowling coach.

Miandad initially said he had resigned because of "pressing family commitments".

But last Sunday he confirmed media reports of disputes between himself and several senior players.

Pakistan cricket sources said Mushtaq was on good terms with the players.

"He's very well liked by the players, in fact it's the players who forced the board to hire him," one veteran reporter said.

Mushtaq, the first Pakistani to score 25,000 runs in first-class cricket, has twice previously coached the national team.

He was fired after three months in 1995 after a home defeat by Sri Lanka.

Re-appointed in 1996, he quit after 13 months in a pay dispute.

Sarfraz, one of Pakistan's leading pace bowlers in the 1970s, has in the past made allegations of match-fixing in Pakistani cricket.

Pakistan open their World Cup challenge against West Indies at Bristol on May 16.

Paul Strang-ler



PAUL STRANG

UNDATED, May 7 (AFP): Paul Strang made his first class debut as a leg-spinner and a goolgy exponent for

Zimbabwe "B" against touring Kent and he quickly became one of his country's most renowned cricketers.

After watching South Africa Test cricketer Peter Carlstein bowl leg breaks he decided to take up that speciality and was an immediate success.

His representative career began when he was still at school playing for Mashonaland Country Districts against New Zealand Young Internationals. He then went on tour to Pakistan and learned much from their Mushtaq Ahmed.

Strang still struggled in those early years. He was badly mauled by Chris Cairns of New Zealand and his three Test wickets on debut against Sri Lanka were in truth all due to poor batting.

But his promise as an attacking spinner remained evi-

dent and he was persevered with.

He figured largely for Zimbabwe in the 1996 World Cup in India, taking 12 wickets at only 16 runs each.



PAUL STRANG

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.

He also became only the 18th Test player to hit a century and take five wickets in a match.

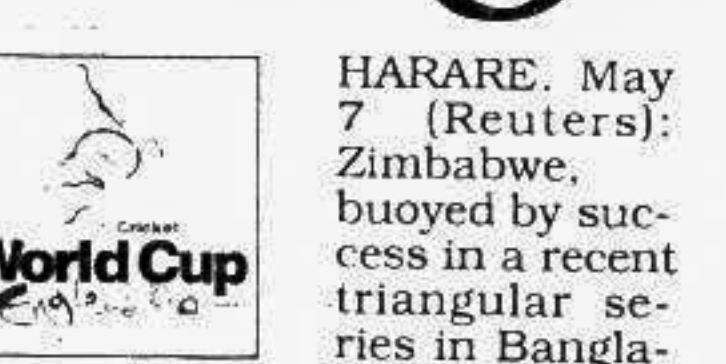
In 1997 he joined Kent for the English season until Carl Hooper of West Indies became available. He had reasonable success but it was a wet summer and the pitches did not suit him.

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

Target Super Six



PAUL STRANG

HARARE, May 7 (Reuters): Zimbabwe, buoyed by success in a recent triangular series in Bangladesh and a

good run in one-day internationals in the past 12 months, are aiming for a finish among the top six at the World Cup.

Zimbabwe, who gained Test status in 1992, have not made it past the first round in the last four World Cups.

But what would have been a wild dream only a couple years ago looks possible for them this time.

In their previous 25 World Cup matches spread over four tournaments they have won just three games, against England, Australia and Kenya.

But recently Zimbabwe have lifted their game. After a lone Test success against Pakistan in 1995, they registered two wins last year, at home against India, and then comfortably beat Pakistan by seven wickets for their first Test win abroad, a victory sufficient to register their first series win with the following two Tests both being hit by bad weather.

In March, Zimbabwe dominated a triangular one-day tournament in Bangladesh which also involved Kenya, winning all their matches and crushing Kenya in the final by 202 runs.

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

against Kenya in the qualifying round but were comfortably beaten by West Indies, Sri Lanka, Australia and India.

Zimbabwe have also been drawn in the same group as Kenya this time and must fancy their chances. Their group A also includes hosts England, holders Sri Lanka, South Africa and India.

They will hope to upset at least one of them.

The African side are rank outsiders and admit they have no chance of repeating Sri Lanka's surprise victory in 1995 but they do boast an impressive 5-1 winning record against England in one-day internationals.

"We have a very good record against England and we're feeling pretty confident ahead of the tournament," said captain Alistair 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.

The England coach was hauled over the coals by his English Cricket Board bosses for his comments and the incident soured relations between the two sides.

But Campbell - summoning all the skills of his Downing Street spin-doctor namesake - does not believe there will be any bad blood in Nottingham.

"I think the incident still ranks with the public in Zimbabwe but I can honestly say the players haven't thought about it."

"People say things in the heat of the moment which they regret later on. I think David apologised at the time and it would be very unprofessional on our part to mention it again."

"There is a huge expectation back home because of our recent form. We've had a tremendous season to date and I hope we will stay in winning ways this month," said Campbell.

"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."

TRACK RECORD

LONDON, May 7 (AFP): Zimbabwe's cricket World Cup track record: 1983-1996 - played 25, won 3, lost 22. Eliminated before semi-finals: 1983, 1987, 1992, and 1996

1983 Played 6, won 1, lost 5 Group matches

Nottingham, June 9 - Zimbabwe bt Australia by 13 runs, Zimbabwe 239-6 (Fletcher 69 not), Australia 226-7 (Wessels 76, R. Marsh 50 not, Fletcher 4-42)

Leicester, June 11 - India bt Zimbabwe by 5 wkts, Zimbabwe 155 (Lal 3-27), India 157-5 (Patil 50)

Worcester, June 13 - West Indies bt Zimbabwe by 8 wkts, Zimbabwe 218-2 (Houghton 54, Fletcher 71 not, Roberts 3-36), West Indies 105-2 (Greenidge 105 not, Gomes 75 not)

Southampton, June 16 - Australia bt Zimbabwe by 32 runs, Australia 272-7 (Wood 73), Zimbabwe 240 (Houghton 84, Hogg 3-40, Chappell 3-47)

Tunbridge Wells, June 18 - India bt Zimbabwe by 31 runs, India 266-8 (Kapil Dev 175 not, Rawson 3-47, Curran 3-65), Zimbabwe 235 (Curran 73, Lal 3-42)

Birmingham, June 20 - West Indies bt Zimbabwe by 10 wkts, Zimbabwe 171 (Curran 62, Daniel 3-28, Richards 3-41), West Indies 172-0 (Haynes 88 not, Bacchus 80 not)

1987 Played 6, lost 6 Group matches

Hyderabad, India, October 10 - New Zealand bt Zimbabwe by 3 runs, New Zealand 242-7 (Snedden 64, Crowe 72), Zimbabwe 239 (Houghton 142, Butchart 54)

Madras, October 13 - Australia bt Zimbabwe by 96 runs, Australia 235-9 (Marsh 62, Border 67), Zimbabwe 139 (O'Donnell 4-39)

Bombay, October 17 - India bt Zimbabwe by 8 wkts, Zimbabwe 135 (Pycroft 61, Prabhakar 4-19, M. Singh 3-21), India 136-2

Calcutta, October 23 - New Zealand bt Zimbabwe by 4 wkts, Zimbabwe 227-5 (Arnott 51, Houghton 50, Pycroft 52), New Zealand 228-6 (Crowe 58, Crowe 88 not)

Ahmedabad, India, October 26 - India bt Zimbabwe by 7 wkts, Zimbabwe 191-7 (Arnott 60), India 194-3 (Gavaskar 50, Sidhu 55)

TRACK RECORD

Zimbabwe 201-7 (Akram 3-21) Brisbane, February 29 - West Indies bt Zimbabwe by 75 runs, West Indies 264-8 (Lara 72, Richardson 56, Hooper 63, Brandes 3-45), Zimbabwe 189-7 (Houghton 55, Shah 60 not, Benjamin 3-27)

Napier, New Zealand, March 3 - New Zealand bt Zimbabwe by 48 runs, New Zealand 162-3 (off 20.5 overs, Crowe 74 not, Jones 57)

Zimbabwe 105-7 (after set 153 off 18 overs, Harris 3-15, Larsen 3-16)

Hamilton, New Zealand, March 7 - India bt Zimbabwe by 55 runs, India 203-7 (Tendulkar 81, Traicos 3-35, Burmester 3-36)

Zimbabwe 104-1 (after set 158 in 19 overs)

Canberra, March 10 - South Africa bt Zimbabwe by 7 wkts, Zimbabwe 163 (McMillan 3-30, Kirsten 3-31), South Africa 164-3 (Wessels 70, Kirsten 62 not)

Hobart, Australia, March 14 - Australia bt Zimbabwe by 128 runs, Australia 265-6 (Jones 54, M. Waugh 66 not, S. Waugh 55), Zimbabwe 137

Albury, Australia, March 18 - Zimbabwe bt England by 9 runs, Zimbabwe 134 (Botham 3-23, Illingworth 3-33), England 125 (Brandes 4-21)

1996 Played 5, won 1, lost 4 Group matches

Hyderabad, India, February 16 - West Indies bt Zimbabwe by 6 wkts, Zimbabwe 151-9 (Ambrose 3-28), West Indies 155-4 (P. Strang 4-40)

Colombo, February 21 - Sri Lanka bt Zimbabwe by 6 wkts, Zimbabwe 228-6 (Campbell 75), Sri Lanka 229-4 (Gurusinha 87, de Silva 91, Streak 3-60)

Patna, India, February 26, 27 - Zimbabwe bt Kenya by 5 wkts, Kenya 134 (P. Strang 5-21), Zimbabwe 137-5 (Ali 3-22)

Nagpur, India, March 1 - Australia bt Zimbabwe by 8 wkts, Zimbabwe 154 (Waller 67, Warne 4-34), Australia 158-2 (M. Waugh 75 not)

Kanpur, India, March 6 - India bt Zimbabwe by 40 runs, India 247-5 (Siddhu 80, Kamli 106), Zimbabwe 207 (Raju 3-30)

AGAINST OTHERS

v Australia: Played 6, won 1 (1983), lost 5 (1983, 1987 x2, 1992, 1996)

v England: Played 1, won 1 (1992)

v India: Played 6, lost 6 (1983 x2, 1987 x2, 1992, 1996)

v New Zealand: Played 3, lost 3 (1987 x2, 1992)

v Pakistan: Played 1, lost 1 (1992)

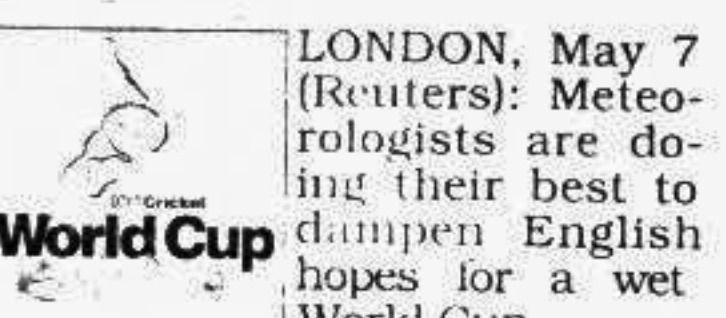
v South Africa: Played 1, lost 1 (1992)

v Sri Lanka: Played 2, lost 2 (1992, 1996)

v West Indies: Played 4, lost 4 (1983 x2, 1992, 1996)

v Zimbabwe: Played 1, won 1 (1996)

Whacky weather



PAUL STRANG

LONDON, May 7 (Reuters): Meteorologists are doing their best to dampen English hopes for a wet World Cup.

Rain during cricket's showpiece limited-overs tournament starting in England on May 14 could produce conditions in which the host team flourish, with their experience of batting and bowling on seaming pitches.

However, weather forecasters are saying the right kind of rain might even mean a drier tournament.

Meteorological office spokesman Andy Yeatman said: "In this country, May and June tend to be drier with fewer days of heavy rain."

"Later in the summer it doesn't necessarily rain more

often, but when it does, it tends to be heavier, the sort of rain that could leave the outfield soggy for a while."

Lord's, which stages three matches including the opening fixture between England and Cup holders Sri Lanka and the final on June 20, can expect 33 hours of rain in May and 27 in June.

The number of days with enough rain to stop a match should drop from 13 to 11. But in July the rate of major deluges rises by 17 per cent and there are just as many days with light rain.