

Aussie Rookie replaces Boon

DURHAM, July 8: English county Durham will replace former Australian Test batsman David Boon with uncapped West Australian Simon Katich as its overseas player next season, reports AP.

Katich, a 23-year-old left-handed batsman, was second in the Sheffield Shield averages last season and scored a century against England during its recent Ashes tour to Australia.

Former England skipper Graham Gooch approached Katich, in line for an Australian touring berth next season, on Durham's behalf and offered him a one-year contract.

"Signing players who are on the up has worked well for other clubs, such as Essex when they first took on Mark Waugh," said Gooch on Thursday.

"Simon is viewed as one of the next generation of test batsmen."

He will join a batch of Australian players already in the County Competition, including Stuart Law, Michael Slater and Justin Langer.

Boon, 38, joined Durham after retiring from international cricket in 1996, initially signing a two-season deal to take over as county captain.

Paes returns in style

NEWPORT, Rhode Island, July 8: Days after winning the doubles and mixed doubles titles at Wimbledon, India's Leander Paes once again showed his singles game isn't too shabby, either, reports AP.

The defending champion breezed into the second round of the Hall of Fame Tennis Championships on Wednesday with 6-1, 6-3 victory over Yugoslavia's Nenad Zimonjic.

Paes, 26, used well-placed angle shots and volleys to repeatedly torment his opponent. And Paes, not known as a big server, hit seven aces and didn't face a break point.

Paes, whose victory last year was the only singles title of his career, said the grass courts of Newport are tailored to his game. He played grass-court tennis growing up in India, and the soft grass here produces low bounces that are perfect for the 1.78 metre (5-foot-10) Paes and his compact strokes.

In other matches Wednesday, American Chris Woodruff upset third-seeded David Prinosil of Germany 6-2, 6-4 in a second-round match, and fourth-seeded Andrew Ilie of Australia rallied to beat Italy's Christiano Caratti 5-7, 6-4, 7-5 in a first-round match.

Ilie trailed 5-3 in the deciding set before winning the rest of the games. A bit of a showman, Ilie showed no fear by using a between-the-legs shot at an important moment of the last set.

Asked about the timing of the shot, Ilie said: "It doesn't really matter. If it's there, you might as well do it."

Spadea shocks Kuerten

GSTAAD, Switzerland, July 8: Top seed Gustavo Kuerten crashed out of the Swiss Open in the second round on Wednesday, falling 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 to American Vince Spadea, reports Reuters.

The 29th-ranked Spadea, who lost in the first rounds on Grass at Nottingham and Wimbledon, found that the return to clay brought a return to form as he avenged a quarter-final loss to Kuerten at Monte Carlo.

"When you beat the number one seed and world number five you feel like you can beat anyone in the tournament," said Spadea, still looking for his first career title. "It gives you confidence and I feel comfortable here."

Kuerten, the 1997 French Open champion and the winner of clay court titles in Monte Carlo and Rome this season, was not so comfortable on what is usually his favourite surface, surrendering the first set without a fight.

But when the players returned to the court after an hour's rain delay early in the second set, the momentum appeared to swing in favour of the 22-year-old Brazilian, who won it 6-2.

Kuerten then broke Spadea to open the third but the 24-year-old American refused to fold and eventually forced the set to a tiebreak which he won 8-6.

FU dives into gold

PALMA, Spain, July 8 (AFP/AP): Mingzha Fu, China's triple Olympic gold medalist who retired three years ago after the Atlanta Games at the grand old age of 18, tonight, launched her comeback by winning the World Student Games 10-metre platform diving title.

But only just, a desperately poor final dive — by her own high standards — saw her nearly hand the victory to her teammate, Rui Wang.

Fu won her first World Student Games title in the end by just 0.39 pts, 522.30 to Wang's 522.00. Anne Montminy, of Canada, took bronze with 504.90.

"I'm happy to win my first international championship since I retired," Fu said. "But I wasn't satisfied with today's performance. I think I can do better. I expect better."

"I hope I improve by the time of the Sydney Olympics."

Fu, who won her first Olympic gold in Barcelona when aged just 14, decided to leave the sport after her double gold in 1996, due to a desire to take up university studies, and because of nagging back and hip injuries which caused her to need hospital treatment.

Thorpe backs Stewart

LONDON, July 8 (Internet report): Surrey's NatWest Trophy hero Graham Thorpe is backing his under-fire England colleague Alec Stewart to come through his current batting crisis.

Stewart's poor run continued when he made only 21 in Surrey's five-wicket success over Worcestershire at New Road which took them into the quarter-finals.

It was not what he was looking for after his scores of naught and one in the first Test with New Zealand led to question marks being raised over his international future.

But Thorpe, whose unbeaten 91 won him the man-of-the-match award, believes it is only a matter of time before Stewart again comes up trumps.

The left-hander said: "Most of us know him pretty well and Alec is not a guy who is going to panic about how things are going at present and he has shown such strength over the years."

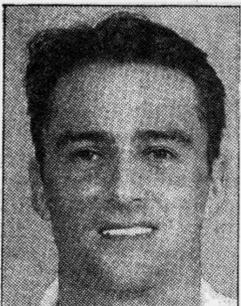
"Alec has had a bit of a rough trot, but we have all been there before."

"We will support him through it and we know he is a class player who is going to come out of this run."

"Everybody has a bad run and the important thing is whether you are going to back a

bloke who is good enough at that (international) level.

"It's not my decision but I've seen him play over the years and I know what he is capable of and one Test where things didn't go well is not the end of the world."



GRAHAM THORPE

Thorpe hit eight fours in his 148-ball innings as Surrey reached their 205 target on a slow and low pitch with 19 balls to spare.

Thorpe, who was dropped on 31 by Vikram Solanki off Tom Moody, said: "Sometimes it is hard when you come away from home because the pitches are

not always ideally suited to the way we want to play.

"But then you just have to get stuck in and get your heads down."

"I had a bit of luck today but that's part of one-day cricket and I just kept going."

"I was not worried about being stranded in the 90s" he added, clearly a reference to England Test hero Alex Tudor being left unbeaten on 99 while Thorpe was batting at the other end.

"Winning is the most important thing for all the boys, getting over the finishing line, and I am happy with my own form."

Surrey overcame the disappointment of Stewart's failure to complete a five-wicket stroll. Stewart had fallen to Stuart Lampitt to leave Surrey perched uneasily on 42 for three in pursuit of a 205 target.

But then two more of Surrey's army of England players - Thorpe and Mark Butcher - featured in the decisive stand of the game which saw their side home with 3.1 overs to spare.

They added 142 in 32 overs for the fourth wicket and experienced few alarms once they had survived a let-off apiece at the hands of Solanki.

Thorpe profited from Solanki's slip to such an extent that he went onto hit eight boundaries in his unbeaten 91 which spanned 148 balls.

Elliott expects an explanation

SUDNEY, July 8 (Internet report): Matthew Elliott will seek out chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns after the opening batsman was surprisingly dumped from the Australian Cricket Board's list of 25 contracted players.

The classy left-hander, 27, is keen to discover what he must do to reignite an international career which has spectacularly stalled a second time.

It will be a costly demise. The minimum retainer is \$65,000 and he will lose as much again when he is overlooked for the coming tour of Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, beginning next month.

In Australia players earn an extra \$8000 for each Test and \$3750 a one-day game.

Elliott was unavailable for comment yesterday but Tony Free from Elliott's management group, Advantage International, said the batsman was disappointed and shocked.

"He's been encouraged to seek feedback from the selection panel," Free said.

"He's determined to get back and he's already making a plan to do that."

Hohns refused to discuss individuals yesterday.

"We have picked the people we think we will use during the coming season but that does not mean that uncontracted players will not play," he said.

"Ultimately form dictates who plays and who doesn't."

The reigning Sheffield Shield cricketer of the year, Elliott was recalled to replace retired captain Mark Taylor at the top of the order for the series against the West Indies.

He had a bad tour on and off the field, losing his place to Greg Blewett for the last Test.

In a complicated new system weighed in favour of Tests, retainers extend up to \$220,000

and there is a captain's bonus of \$100,000 to be divided among Test and one-day leaders and deputies. Obviously Steve Waugh will get the lion's share.

Elliott was the most dramatic of six changes from the list released yesterday, with the harsh treatment of Michael Kasprovicz not over yet.

The spirited Queensland fast bowler has played just one Test since claiming 5-28 to be man of the match in Australia's only

winning Test in India early last year.

He should have toured the West Indies ahead of Queensland team-mate Andy Bichel, who has also not had his contract renewed.

Also overlooked were spinners Gavin Robertson and Brad Young.

The big winner from Elliott's demise has been Queensland opening batsman Matthew Hayden, who is back in favour.

Luckiest among the 25 are under-performing all-rounders Shane Lee, Andrew Symonds

and Brendon Julian. Lee and Symonds have not been previously listed.

Adam Dale and Colin Miller were rewarded for consistent performances over the last year or so.

The only player without international experience to gain a contract was impressive young West Australian batsman Simon Katich.

A graduate of the Australian Cricket Academy production line, the left-hander is over the moon to be included in the squad after playing only 21 first class matches.

"I'm very surprised, shocked really - it is a dream come true," he told last night.

Two years ago I was wondering whether I would be good enough to play shield cricket because I was almost 21 and hadn't had a game.

"I wondered whether it would ever happen and it's turned out really well."

Katich, 24, continues to firm as the most likely to fill the 15th place in the Test touring squad to Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe from next month.

The selectors have made it clear that with a number of Australia's stars now over 30 they will begin blooding the next generation.

The ACB contract list: Michael Bevan (NSW), Greg Blewett (SA), Adam Dale (Qld), Damien Fleming (Vic), Adam Gilchrist (WA), Jason Gillespie (SA), Matthew Hayden (Qld), Ian Healy (Qld), Brendon Julian (WA), Simon Katich (WA), Justin Langer (WA), Shane Lee (NSW), Darren Lehmann (SA), Damien Martyn (WA), Stuart MacGill (NSW), Glean McGrath (NSW), Colin Miller (Tas), Tom Moody (WA), Ricky Ponting (Tas), Paul Reifel (Vic), Michael Slater (NSW), Andrew Symonds (Qld), Shane Warne (Vic), Mark Waugh (NSW), Steve Waugh (NSW)

winning Test in India early last year.

He should have toured the West Indies ahead of Queensland team-mate Andy Bichel, who has also not had his contract renewed.

Also overlooked were spinners Gavin Robertson and Brad Young.

The big winner from Elliott's demise has been Queensland opening batsman Matthew Hayden, who is back in favour.

Luckiest among the 25 are under-performing all-rounders Shane Lee, Andrew Symonds

and Brendon Julian. Lee and Symonds have not been previously listed.

Adam Dale and Colin Miller were rewarded for consistent performances over the last year or so.

The only player without international experience to gain a contract was impressive young West Australian batsman Simon Katich.

A graduate of the Australian Cricket Academy production line, the left-hander is over the moon to be included in the squad after playing only 21 first class matches.

"I'm very surprised, shocked really - it is a dream come true," he told last night.

Two years ago I was wondering whether I would be good enough to play shield cricket because I was almost 21 and hadn't had a game.

Jaisimha passes away

HYDERABAD, July 8: Former Test cricketer and national selector ML Jaisimha died here on Wednesday due to throat cancer. He was 60, reports PTI.

Jai, as he was affectionately called, was unconscious and appeared to be drifting away a few minutes before the end, his son and former Ranji player Vivek Jaisimha said.

A large number of cricket fans and Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) office bearers thronged the Sainik Puri residence, where the former Test Star breathed his last at around 1400 hours.

Jaisimha, the flamboyant batsman of yesteryears, was recently granted a sum of 25,000 rupees by the Indian Cricket Board from its benevolent fund while he was in hospital for a radiation treatment.

The stylish cricketer from Hyderabad scored 2,056 runs in 39 Test matches studded with three centuries and 12 half-centuries in his 12-year Test career from 1956 to 1971.

Jaisimha had led Hyderabad and South Zone with the then national captain Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi playing under him. He was also the vice-president of HCA and the Hyderabad Ranji coach last season.

Jaisimha is survived by his wife and two sons, Vivek and Vidyut, both of whom played first-class cricket.

The funeral was held in the evening, family sources said. Meanwhile, International Cricket Council (ICC) President Jagmohan Dalmiya today said ML Jaisimha's untimely death had left a void in Indian cricket which would be difficult to fill.

In his reaction, Dalmiya said "Jaisimha was not only a great gentleman cricketer on the field but an amiable person who was liked by everyone."

"He was not only a great cricketer but had a lot of potential as an administrator, he was a good friend of mine it is a big personal loss for me," Dalmiya said.

Sachin takes up yoga

MUMBAI, July 8: Master batsman Sachin Tendulkar has turned to practising yoga recently and is doing new exercises at home daily after undergoing a training session earlier this week at Pune's Iyengar Institute of Yoga run by the world-renowned BKS Iyengar, reports PTI.

The ace batsman, however, denied that the session he underwent had anything to do with the back spasms for which he underwent treatment in London before the World Cup.

"Yes, I had been there generally to try and improve my fitness and not specifically for any other reason. Yoga can only help and does not cause any damage (to the body). The session had nothing to do with my back which is fine," Tendulkar said today.

Tendulkar had said on his return home after the mega event that he did not experience any trouble with his back during the championship.

Asked how he felt after the yoga session, the ace batsman said that it (yoga) cannot help overnight.

"I do the exercises daily for half an hour. It will help over a period of time. All I wanted to know as how I could become as fit as possible and keep my body more flexible," he added.

Asked whether he intended to return for further training at the institute, Tendulkar said, "I have not yet decided."

Hicham sets new mark

ROME, July 8: Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj broke the men's mile world record on Wednesday when he clocked an unofficial three minutes 43.12 at the second Golden League meeting of the season, reports Reuters.

The previous best of 3:44.39 was set by Algeria's Noureddine Morceli in Rieti, Italy in September 1993.

streets, that's a quite different problem to deal with. Hooligans are not the same thing as crime on the streets."

But knowing a negative campaign can backfire, both Charlton and McGivan will always steer their fellow conversationalist back to England and its positives.

To be honest, there is nothing wrong with our bid," Charlton said. "Simply, we're ready. We have all the stadia. We know we have the best bid. Now all we do is convince FIFA."

England hoping for the best

LOS ANGELES, July 8: Englishmen in a pub are more often than not willing to inform their guests that England is the birthplace of soccer, reports AP.

The history of the Football Association, with its origins in a pub in 1863, and the FA Cup, the oldest soccer tournament in the world, can make an Englishman swell with pride. It's also something the country's bid team for the 2006 World Cup tries not to mention too often.

For if a year from now the selection of the venue for the 2006 championship just comes down to emotional issues, England is likely to lose out.

With FIFA president Sepp Blatter openly and repeatedly announcing his preference for the tournament to go to the African continent, England 2006 campaign director Alec McGivan understands what he's up against.

"You have to face up to the fact that Africa's bid is based on an emotional appeal that it has not had the tournament," McGivan said. "I don't know if Blatter feels they have the technical organisation."

"It must go to Africa at some point. The only argument is win. It's FIFA's responsibility to determine when. I don't know if Africa is ready. I know we are."

South Africa and Morocco are the two African nations still in the running among the five candidates. Besides England, Germany and Brazil also are bidding.

Against that opposition, England's bidgers feel that it's strongest argument is its technical merits: modern stadiums that already are in place; telecommunications and transport networks; television facilities; and the like.

"It's not simply an event," said bid president Bobby Charlton, a former England great. "It's a major, major event. It's grown from 16 to 24 to now 32 teams. The number of stadia you need, security, transportation, the cost of building the stadia. We already have the stadia. Unless you're completely ready, you have to think twice about it."

Conversely, McGivan is more than willing to point out the perception of South Africa's security problem, street crime.

"It's not a football bid," he said. "If you have crime in

streets, that's a quite different problem to deal with. Hooligans are not the same thing as crime on the streets."

But knowing a negative campaign can backfire, both Charlton and McGivan will always steer their fellow conversationalist back to England and its positives.

To be honest, there is nothing wrong with our bid," Charlton said. "Simply, we're ready. We have all the stadia. We know we have the best bid. Now all we do is convince FIFA."

It makes mention of itself being soccer's birthplace, along with its only World Cup title in 1966, the only time it has hosted the tournament. But the references are rare.

On the negative side, England 2006 also is aware of its perceived weak spot, the ghosts of Heysel and Hillsborough.

"British hooligans," Charlton said. "We haven't the problem in years, but every time I address a news conference I always get asked about it."

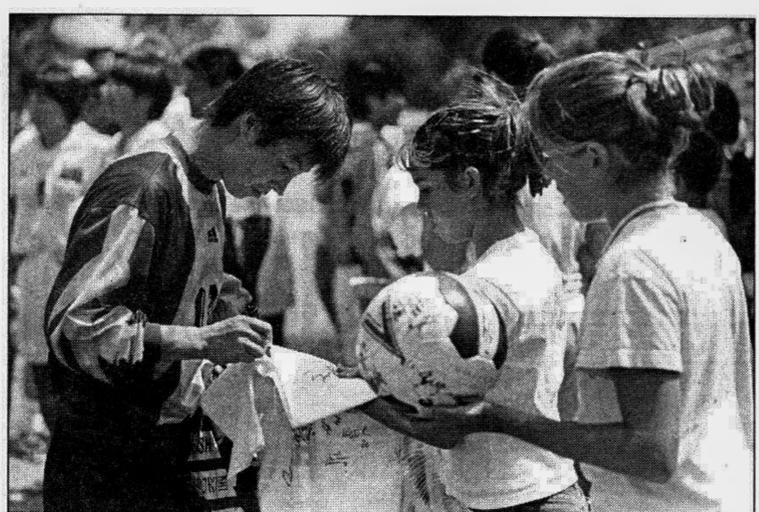
England 2006 addresses the issue without mentioning Heysel, the former stadium in Brussels, Belgium, where in 1985 at the European Champions Cup final 39 people were killed, mostly Italian fans of Juventus, beaten and crushed in a riot blamed on their counterparts from Liverpool.

Bradford 1985 is something else missed out. When a fire broke out in a dilapidated and rubbish-strewn section of a wooden stand at Bradford City's Valley Parade stadium, 56 fans were killed trying to escape through locked exits.

What it does highlight are "safe, secure and accessible — England's stadiums lead the way."

Conversely, McGivan is more than willing to point out the perception of South Africa's security problem, street crime.

"It's not a football bid," he said. "If you have crime in



Chinese custodian Gao Hong obliging autograph hunters during a practice session at Claremont on July 7. China meet USA in the final of the Women's World Cup tomorrow. — AFP photo

It doesn't get bigger than this



LOS ANGELES, July 8: An expected sellout crowd of 90,000, including President Bill Clinton, watching the United States and China play for the women's World Cup title in the historic Rose Bowl, reports AP.

"I couldn't set it up any better," US forward Cindy Parlow said Wednesday.

The pageantry, the raucous fans and the world's two best teams make Saturday's final at the Pasadena stadium a showcase event for women's soccer.

"Everybody's talked about this World Cup as history in the making and it's because of all those things," forward Tiffany Milbrett said.

The point I like is there were 80,000 people watching the men's World Cup final. There's going to be 90,000 watching the

women's World Cup final," she said. "All those things knock the boots off everybody because they weren't expecting it."

In the 1994 men's World Cup final, Brazil defeated Italy on penalty kicks after regulation ended in a scoreless tie in front of a sellout crowd at the Rose Bowl.

"I still remember the fabulous atmosphere, but the game still lagged behind," FIFA communications director Keith Cooper said.

"You ask most people what they thought of the final of 1994, they'll say disappointed because there were no goals and they finished on penalties. The game's got to be good."

Parlow predicted a low-scoring final because the United States and China play well-organized defence. But that doesn't mean viewers will be yawning.

"Both teams love to attack. I love to take chances going forward and that's very exciting for the fans," she said. "Both

teams will attack at all costs."

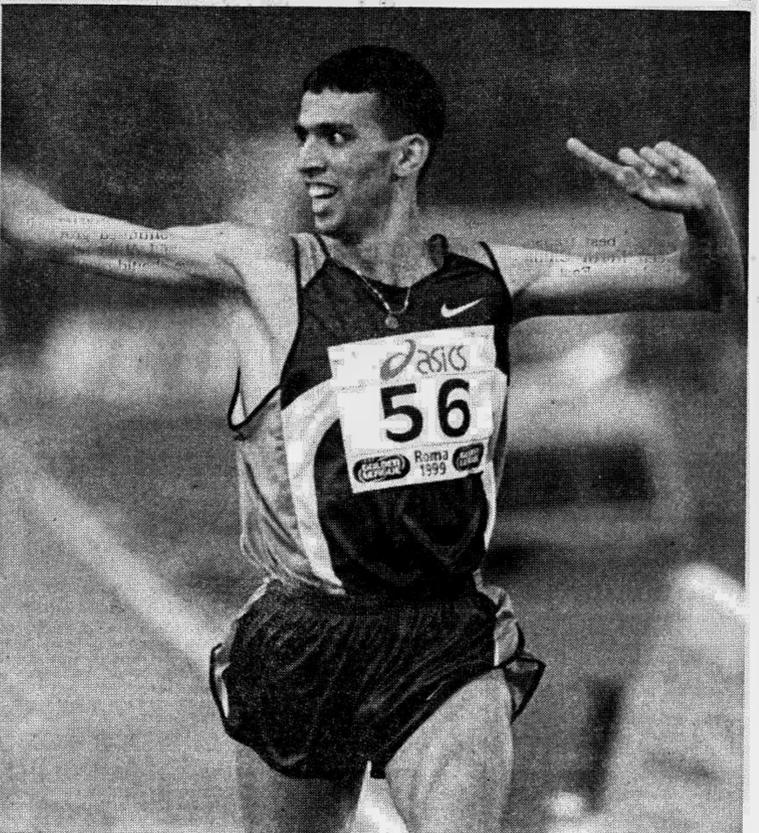
United States coach Tony DiCiccio said a lot of goals aren't necessary to create a memorable game.

"As long as there's attacking soccer and teams trying to score goals and plays by the goalkeepers and near-misses, it doesn't have to be a lot of goals," he said.

"It's going to be two teams that are fit, that are ready, that are going to go out to win this game and they're not going to hold anything back. They're going to play attractive soccer."

Because many of the Americans and Chinese have worked years to reach this level, Milbrett said, "We don't have to make sure we're reminding each other to play high level, it's just going to be that."

"At the end of the day, it always comes down to the game," FIFA's Cooper said. "I'm pretty confident that Saturday's going to be a good day."



Hicham El-Guerrouj of Morocco starts celebrating after breaking the world mile record at the Golden League meet in Rome on July 7. — AFP photo

A game US girls look up to



TORRANCE, California, July 8 (AP): Brittany Stevens jumps into the air and fearlessly heads a soccer ball. Around her girls in blue jerseys and white shorts practice their dribbling and long kicks in a windswept park near the Pacific Ocean.

The 12-year-old from Torrance was introduced to soccer five years ago by her mother.

"She said it would be good for me because I like to kick things," Stevens said. "You're in the game to have fun and not just for competition. It's fun to be aggressive, roll in the mud and slide."

Stevens is part of a new generation of young, female fans united in their passion for soccer. The enthusiasm has been heightened this summer by the United States' quest for the Women's World Cup title.

The kids' soccer boom has been under way for a decade. Interest among girls spiked after the 1996 Olympics, when the United States defeated China for the first women's soccer gold medal.

The United States won the 1991 Women's World Cup, but it did it in China, a victory that barely registered a blip on US television. The trophy chase this year has been nationally televised on home turf in front of sellout crowds.

"The girls are seeing there's an opportunity," said Mike Nel-

son, a regional coordinator and coach of American Youth Soccer Organisation teams in Torrance.

"The interest has been there, there just hasn't been the opportunity for it to manifest itself," said Susan Reed, senior editor of Women's Sports and Fitness magazine.

"There's a joy and passion that these women really convey that is infectious and that girls can relate to."

The United States plays China for the championship Saturday at the Rose Bowl. A sellout crowd of more than 88,000 is expected.

"I want to be a soccer player after watching the tournament. It has inspired me," said 11-year-old Ye Pei of Devon, Pennsylvania. "My favorite player is the Chinese goalie because she is so athletic."

The zeal of the players is often matched by the fervor of the fans. Several thousand young girls and women dyed their hair red-white-and-blue, painted American flags on their faces and followed the team around the country.

"This team has