

Sport

Sword hanging over Blewett

HAMILTON, New Zealand Mar 28: Australia's record-breaking win streak could be struggling Greg Blewett from being dropped for Friday's third cricket Test against New Zealand here, reports AFP.

Blewett's head is on the block after Monday's second Test win in Wellington, scratching 25 runs from 115 balls to continue a disappointing summer in the Test team.

Since he was recalled to the national team in the Caribbean 12 months ago, Blewett has averaged just 29.54 in 24 completed innings, failing to score a century.

His form has fallen away in New Zealand, where he has scored 50 runs in four unconvincing knocks, opening the door for Queensland opener Matthew Hayden to return to the team.

But captain Steve Waugh provided some comfort for Blewett when he said it would be tough to change the team which had taken Australia to a national record nine consecutive Test wins.

"I haven't really thought about it, but if you think you can improve a side, then you make changes," Waugh said here Tuesday.

We always sit down before the Test match and work out what our best team is for the conditions and we'll do that again but it's pretty hard to change a winning side when you've won nine in a row."

Blewett was the only batsman in the regular top seven not to score a century during the winning streak, despite passing 80 twice during the home summer.

The South Australian right-hander had done the hard work in two of his Test innings in New Zealand, reaching 17 and 25, but he failed to build on the starts, increasing the pressure for a change at the top.

Hayden, who has not played a Test in three years, did all he could with four half-centuries in his first six innings on tour, looking impressive when he slotted into the No.3 position in the one-day series.

The Queenslander would also provide the advantage of a left-right handed opening combination with Michael Slater, who returned to form with a typically dazzling 143 in Wellington.

Tarun

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tua, who scored 24 in a vital 55-runs ninth wicket stand after Mohammedan were reduced to 99/8, enabled the team escape humiliation.

The experienced Lankan hammered a couple of fours and a massive sixer against slow left-arm Enamul Hoque over long on in his polished knock.

The veteran of more than one hundred internationals also gave an unimaginative Mohammedan a ray of hopes when he captured two wickets in one over, leaving Tarun in an unconvincing position with 64 for three.

But Tarun overcame the looming pressure with experienced Minazul Abedin and Khaled Masood producing 46 runs for the fourth wicket. Minazul scored 23 off 40 balls before failing to a fine catch by Tillekeratne at cover.

Masood however had other ideas in mind. He batted carefully to guide his side to safety in association with Enamul Hoque after Al-Shahriar was out for only 2.

Masood hammered half a dozen fours in his 89-ball innings. But the most fascinating aspect of the dapper right-hander was his stunning form this season.

It was his fourth undefeated knock in pressure situation. He had earlier scored an unbeaten 73 against Agrani Bank, 66 not out against Kalabagan and 74 and 72 against Sadharan Bima. His last fifty took his aggregate total in six matches to 289 averaging 14.45.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Janakantha Premier Division Cricket League match between Surjo Tarun and Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday:

MOHAMMEDAN

Rashedul	lbw	b	Anis	0	
I Hamid	c K	Masood	b	Moshed	3
Nahid	b	Anis	0		
Hannan	c K	Masood	b	Anis	11
Athar	b	Chauhan	28		
Tillekeratne	c Imran	b R	Chauhan	70	
Kalpage	c K	Masood	b R	Chauhan	4
Neeyamur	b	Enamul	8		
Rafique	run out	1			
Mortuza	run out	24			
Monjurul	not out	7			
Extras: (b-5, nb-2, w-5)					12
Total: (All out in 49.3 overs)					168
Fall of wickets: 1/ 4; 2/ 4; 3/ 4; 4/ 26; 6/ 62; 7/ 97; 8/ 99; 9/ 151					

Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Anisur	Rahman	10	2	38	3
Moshed	Ali	10	4	20	1
Sala	Erfan	10	0	28	0
Rajesh	Chauhan	9	0	27	3
Enamul	Hoque	4	0	25	1
Jafar	Sarfaraz	6	0	25	0

SHARJAH	United	Arab	Emirates	
Mar 28:	Hansie	Cronje	's South	
	stormed	Africa	into the Sharjah	
	Coca-Cola Cup	final	on Monday	
	with a six-wicket	victory	that	
	virtually knocked	India	out of	
	the triangular	tournament,		
	reports AFP.			

The Indians, batting first in a match they had to win to stay afloat, crumbled under a fiery four-wicket haul by fast bowler Mortantau Hayward to be shot out for 164.

India's total was the same they managed in the first match against the South Africans last Wednesday.

On that occasion, the South Africans cruised home in the 30th over without losing a wicket. This time they did it with 7.2 overs to spare as Jacques Kallis scored an unbeaten 53.

South Africa's third successive win in the tournament -- they have not lost a match in nine appearances at this desert venue -- ensured them a place in Friday's final even before their last league match against Pakistan on Tuesday.

India ended their campaign with two points, the same as Pakistan, but their inferior run-rate has virtually shut the door on their final hopes.

The South African reply to the modest target went through anxious moments as India reduced them to 96-4 in the 26th over.

Azharuddin made 36 when he was caught short of his six wickets.

After openers Gary Kirsten and Herschelle Gibbs had

knocked off 30 runs by the sev-

Champion of durability



KINGSTON, Jamaica, Mar 28 (Reuters): When Freddie Trueman became the first player in Test cricket to take 300 wickets he was asked if he thought his record would be broken.

"If anyone does they'll be bloody tired," was the Yorkshire and England fast bowler's forthright response after he reached the landmark in 1964.

It is a sentiment Courtney Walsh will appreciate after the West Indies paceman became the world's leading Test wicket-taker on 435.

Walsh's achievement, at the age of 37 and in his 114th Test, is an outstanding feat of great skill, immense stamina and considerable resolve at a time when the volume of Test cricket is far greater than in Trueman's day.

Moreover, during the last five years the indefatigable Walsh has carried the attack with Curtly Ambrose because West Indies have been unable to field their customary battery of four fast bowlers of high quality.

It was a strategy that pro-

duced West Indies' all-conquering sides of the 1980s and early 1990s, until they could no longer find the top-class replacements to give Walsh and Ambrose the support their predecessors had enjoyed.

Walsh subsequently shunned his part of the burden in an uncomplaining fashion, as well as taking on the responsibility of captaining the side in 1994 and 1996-97 and continuing to play for English county Gloucestershire.

Throughout this phase, the skills he learned in his native Jamaica, which were developed in England and honed to perfection on Test grounds around the world, remained undiminished.

Walsh has always been a thinking cricketer, as he showed in the way he adjusted his bowling in English conditions.

His 1984 debut season, restricted by West Indies' tour of England, brought 18 wickets at an expensive 34.55 each but 12 months later he was savouring a haul of 82 county championship wickets at a mere 19.95.

Walsh, though certainly

quick, has never generated speed in the manner of compatriot Michael Holding, with whom his Test career overlapped in the mid-1980s.

Supple, with a high action, Walsh achieves disconcertingly awkward bounce, while his variations in pace and length have brought about the downfall of many batsmen.

What sets Walsh apart in the world of test fast bowling is his fitness record. The fact he suffers very few injuries has been a key element in the durability that has taken him past some significant landmarks.

The Hamilton-based pair, who play for Northern Districts, were called up when selectors decided against tinkering with the struggling top order.

The 19-year-old Martin and Tuffey, 22, played against Australia in a four-day tour match earlier this month and had been named for a New Zealand A tour of England later this year.

Martin only made his first-class debut last month, taking 12-55 in his third match against Auckland, before he struggled against Australia.

The left-arm spinner finished with the unflattering figures of 1-139, but selectors obviously felt he could play a role in the absence of his injured Northern Districts teammate Daniel Vettori.

The star left-arm spinner was Tuesday diagnosed with a stress fracture in his lower back, ruling him out of the final Test of the season after he bowled only 23 overs in the second Test.

Vettori will need about three months' rest, joining pacemen Dion Nash and Geoff Allott on a list, which contributed to New Zealand's opening two losses in the Test series.

Tuffey showed promise against the Australians earlier this month, taking match figures of 3-116 with his right-arm fast-medium pace on a wicket favouring the batsmen.

Tuffey or Martin could yet carry the drinks in this Test, with off-spinner Paul Wiseman in contention on a wicket which should yield plenty of runs.

Tuffey's inclusion was a tough break for his Northern Districts teammate Doull, who received only limited opportunities in the opening Tests.

Stephen Fleming (captain), Craig Spearman, Matthew Horne, Mathew Sinclair, Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Chris Cairns, Adam Parore, Paul Wiseman, Daryl Tuffey, Shayne O'Connor, Bruce Martin.

Source: Internet

Walsh proclaimed king

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amount of tributes that have been paid to him at this time," a beaming Wollaston said. Jamaican Prime Minister PJ Patterson, Sports Minister Portia Simpson-Miller and West Indies Cricket Board President Pat Rousseau offered their praise, and Dev congratulated Walsh by telephone.

Walsh said he was still focusing on the Test, rather than on extending his new record.

"The most important thing still is winning this Test match," Walsh said. "Once we can win this Test match, then (the record) will be icing on the cake. I'll be a lot more elated than."

"He always troubled me the most," said former England wicketkeeper Jack Russell, a long-time team mate of Walsh at Gloucestershire.

"Ambling in off that smooth run you just don't know when he will produce that 'effort' ball, the one that appears to be bowled with the same action but picks up pace, angling in at the batsman, sending the 'keeper of balance as he tries to get the ball joggling back."

"That's as far as I'm looking now," he said. "During England, you can ask that question again."

As soon as Walsh achieved the milestones, congratulatory messages started pouring in.

"Whenever things don't go well, I've always said 'remember Courtney,'" said his grateful captain Adams.

Australian skipper Steve Waugh and his vice-captain Shane Warne Tuesday broke from their own record celebrations here to praise Walsh.

Waugh and Warne joined in the praise for the bowler, who made his debut against Australia in 1984-85.

"It's great he's got it. He's well respected and dedicated and it's a great effort for a fast bowler to stay fit and keep going for over a decade," Waugh said.

"He's also a nice fellow so I think a lot of people will be pleased he broke it. He's played it tough and competitive but he's a good man as well."

Waugh, who became Australia's most successful bowler earlier this month when he claimed his 356th wicket said Walsh was setting a record that would be tough to beat.

"He's raised the bar and the rest of us have to chase him," Waugh said.

"For him to be the No 1 wicket-taker in the history of the game is fair justice."

"He's an all-time great fellow and an all-time great bowler and I would like to think that

we could have a beer or two together when we next catch up."

"He's as fierce as they come on the field but off the field he's a bit of a softie."

Former England captain Mike Atherton believes Walsh's contribution to Caribbean cricket transcends his technical excellence.

"Returning to the West Indies in 1998, it struck me that Courtney epitomised and carried on that tradition of West Indian leaders from the likes of Sir Frank Worrell to Clive Lloyd who put regional solidarity before island rivalry," he said.

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FACTFILE

KINGSTON, Jamaica, Mar 28 (Reuters): Factfile on West Indies fast bowler Courtney Walsh.

1962: Born October 30, Kingston, Jamaica. 1979: Takes record 10-43 in Jamaican school cricket.

1982: Makes debut for Jamaica.

1984: English county debut with Gloucestershire.