

## Athers thinking of retirement?

LONDON, Oct 11: Former England skipper Michael Atherton has rejected a new contract at English county Lancashire to throw up speculation on his retirement, the Press Association reported on Wednesday, says AFP.

The 32-year-old Atherton is expected to discuss a new deal after the series against Australia next year.

Atherton, who made his debut at Lancashire in 1987, recently hinted in a magazine interview that he may make next season his last.

Old Trafford chairman Jack Simmons said: "He has put matters on hold. There is talk of retiring, but I can't see him packing up."

## Donald tonic for Pollock

NAIROBI, Oct 11 (Internet report): Shaun Pollock greeted the return of Allan Donald to the South African team with delight, after the Proteas' premier strike bowler left the one-day arena after the 1999 World Cup.

It is no coincidence that Pollock described the South African bowling performance as "one of the best I have seen from a South African side I have been part of". The inimitable Allan Donald was wearing green and gold again, and the South African captain made the point: "Having AD back is so important to us."

Pollock regarded his own bowling performance as one of the best of his career. With Temba and also fiving, and Boje keeping a tight rein on the English batsman, it's no wonder that the English batsmen were never able to break the shackles.

Another player who is "back" is Jonty Rhodes, if only in the sense that he pulled off a direct hit after his trademark had appeared to go missing from his game for a while.

So, all in all, any team that beats the South African team in this tournament will have to be at peak form.

## Beckham to see knee specialist

LONDON, Oct 11: David Beckham is expected to see a specialist on Wednesday who will determine whether he will need an operation on his injured left knee, reports AFP.

The Manchester United midfielder withdrew from England's World Cup qualifier in Finland on Wednesday because of the problem.

Beckham started the match against Germany last Saturday despite still feeling the effects of the injury, picked up in England training. But he aggravated the knee during the 1-0 defeat when he fell awkwardly.

Beckham played all but seven minutes of the match before being replaced by Ray Parlour.

The Old Trafford star was then pulled out of the squad travelling to Helsinki so he could stay at home for treatment.

He will now almost certainly be sidelined for United's match against Premier League leaders Leicester on Saturday.

## De Bilde on loan to Villa

LONDON, Oct 11: English Premiership side Aston Villa have signed Sheffield Wednesday striker Gilles de Bilde on loan for two months, reports AFP.

The 29-year-old Belgian international is set to go straight into the squad for Saturday's clash at Arsenal.

The Former PSV Eindhoven forward said that he was keen to use his time at Villa Park to kick-start his career.

"This is a nice opportunity for me," he said. "The last few weeks have not been the happiest of my career. What I need is to play for Villa and find my sharpness again."

Villa have taken De Bilde on loan while they wait for the European Union to make a decision on whether or not to scrap transfer fees.

That decision is due on October 31, and De Bilde added: "It is an opportunity to get a permanent deal and that is very exciting."

## Olympic stadium interests both

ROME, Oct 11: Serie A rivals and co-tenants at the Olympic stadium, Lazio and AS Roma remain interested in the purchase of the stadium, the club's respective presidents Sergio Cragnotti and Franco Sensi confirmed Tuesday, reports AFP.

The rivals united when questioned by journalists about a possible deal at a conference at the Economics and Commerce Faculty of the La Sapienza University.

Cragnotti said: "The question of the stadium remains an open one for us. The State Council has given the green light for the sale of the Olympic stadium. We are therefore counting on having negotiations which could take shape in the next few days."

Sensi agreed, saying: "Our interest is in owning the stadium. In summary, we are available and we are waiting for the signals."

## The travelling coaches' tale



BEIRUT, Oct 11 (AFP): Kevin Keegan may have been brutally honest and admitted he wasn't up to international management but there are two coaches preparing for the Asian Cup that simply revel in it.

For journeyman footballer read journeyman coach as Bora

PHOTO: AFP

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