

Wright getting the reins?

NEW DELHI, Nov 1: Former New Zealand Test opener John Wright is likely to be named the first ever foreign coach of the Indian team, a cricket board source said here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) appears to have settled for Wright ahead of former Australian Test stars Greg Chappell and Geoff Marsh, who were also interviewed.

BCCI president AC Muthiah is expected to confirm Wright's appointment on Thursday.

The New Zealand coach of Indian Test star Rahul Dravid's English county side Kent, was preferred by the senior players, the source said.

"We want to pick the man who the players are comfortable with, and they have indicated they wanted Wright," he said.

The BCCI hunted for a foreign coach when former Indian great Kapil Dev quit midway through his two-year term after being investigated in the match-fixing scandal.

Kapil, Test cricket's leading wicket-taker till West Indian Courtney Walsh overtook him in March, said he had lost interest in the game after being embroiled in the controversy.

National Cricket League from Nov 17

Sports Reporter

The second National Cricket League will start across the country from November 17. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) member Alam Chowdhury revealed this yesterday.

There will be some changes to the format of the home and away meet this season. After playing a three-day match, teams will then engage in a limited-overs match on the following day.

Besides, the number of participants will also be increased from six to eight. In addition to the six divisions — Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal who took part in the inaugural competition — national airlines Biman and Dhaka Metropolitan cricket team will make their debut in the league this season.

BCB has selected eleven venues across the country to hold the matches. Those are: Dhaka, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Barisal, Jessore, Khulna, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Comilla and Noakhali.

Qadir keen to tutor English spinners

KARACHI, Nov 1 (Internet report): Abdul Qadir, the great Pakistani leg-spinner of the 1980s, has hinted strongly that he would be prepared to assist in getting a more intense culture of spin into English cricket.

The Times of London reports that Qadir feels England should create a full-time academy for young spinners. And he is willing to consider running it.

He says: "I go to England every year and see you develop great cricketers, so why not spinners? I can guarantee that I would produce spinners if the package is right."

Till the possible "package" gets sorted out, he's on the opposition's side. He is in charge of the Pakistan XI playing against England from today.

Purabi b'ball

Josephites Club defeated Surin Sangha 80-43 in the Purabi Insurance First Division basketball league at the Dharmadhi Basketball gymnasium yesterday, reports UNB.

The winners dominated the first half 39-15.

Mujib caged 23 and Boni 20 for the winners while Fio 14 and Richard 13 for the losers.

In the other match, Dharmadhi Club crushed Hornets Sporting Club 98-55 after leading the first half 46-27.

Pintu made 28, Masud 24 and Shamir 18 for the winners while Banufas caged 24 and Adnan 14 for the losers.

Lara

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In 1993, "MK" (Gupta) discloses that he paid 5,000 pounds to Alec Stewart in exchange for information about pitch, weather, team composition etc whenever England played," the CBI report said.

"MK has further stated that Stewart, however, refused to fix any matches for him."

The report added that Prabhakar had confirmed that he had introduced Stewart to Gupta.

Coca-Cola

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great enthusiasm for the patronisation of cricket, he was equally reluctant to back football in Bangladesh.

"Well, we have not thought about sponsoring Bangladesh football team," said Chatterjee while responding to a question whether Coca-Cola has any plan to promote Bangladesh football.

The general secretary of BCB Sved Ashrafu Huq, external affairs manager of Coca-Cola Leewindfield and business operation manager Khalid Raja, also attended the press briefing.



An AFP file photo of former Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga (R) and his deputy Aravinda de Silva.

Pleaded not guilty

UNDATED, Nov 1 (AFP, Internet): Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga denied Wednesday accepting bribes and rejected allegations contained in an Indian investigation report into match-fixing.

Ranatunga, 36, who retired from international cricket in August, said he had never had any dealings with bookmakers nor was he ever offered money to throw matches.

"Had any offer of a bribe been made to me at any time I would have promptly reported the matter to the appropriate authorities," Ranatunga said in a one-paragraph statement.

He was reacting to allegations in neighbouring India that he and his deputy, Aravinda de Silva, accepted bribes to fix matches.

"The references to me in the Indian newspaper articles are entirely false," he said. There was no immediate reaction from De Silva, who is still playing Test cricket for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's cricket authorities also expressed dismay over these allegations.

A bookmaker, Mukesh Gupta, had claimed in a testimony published in an Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) report that Sri Lanka's Ranatunga and De Silva helped him fix an Indian victory in the Lucknow Test in 1994.

"Both players are now seeking legal advice on a statement they will be issuing later today," a Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) official said. The allegations coming from a questionable character lacks credibility.

MARTIN CROWE

Former New Zealand cricket captain Martin Crowe admitted today taking money from an Indian bookmaker but strongly denied any involvement in match-fixing.

He told the New Zealand Press Association he had taken money from a bookmaker but said he had been tricked into believing the man was a journalist.

Crowe of New Zealand and Alec Stewart of England were also named by Gupta as having taken 20,000 dollars and 5,000 pounds respectively for pitch, weather and team information.

However, Gupta stressed they both refused his offers to fix matches.

He also said Australia's Dean Jones turned down an offer of 40,000 dollars to provide information and fix matches.

The most damning indictment is of Mohammad Azharuddin, who the report says confessed to fixing games with the help of colleagues Ajay Jadeja and Nayan Mongia.

"Azharuddin, in his statement, has accepted receiving money from MK (Gupta) to fix some matches, but has stated he did only two matches for them — Titan Cup match in 1996 at Rajkot and some match in the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka in 1997," the report says.

"This admission of Azhar that he 'did' only two matches for MK during this period appears a dilution of the actual facts in the context of the amount of money he had received from MK," the report says.

Jadeja, the report says, provided "assessment of matches" and passed on information to another Indian bookmaker Utam Chand. Gupta claimed Jadeja had "offered his services" for fixing matches and received money from him.

The report says that Manoj Prabhakar, who first blew the whistle on the scandal back in 1997, was very close to bookmakers and punters both during his playing days and after retirement.

There was also evidence, the report says, of Prabhakar under-performing, passing on information and introducing foreign players to Gupta and other bookmakers.

The CBI said it had found no concrete evidence against former captain and coach Kapil Dev, who was accused by Prabhakar of offering him 25,000 dollars to play badly during a one-day match against Pakistan in Sri Lanka in 1994.

The CBI report says Gupta admitted paying 40,000 dollars to Cronje on the third day of the Kaupur Test to ensure a "South African loss and an investment for future."

Cronje told the South African King commission earlier this year that Gupta had been introduced to him by former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin during the series in India in 1996.

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The report, a copy of which was seen by AFP on Wednesday, is largely made up of testimony from Indian bookmakers, as well as players and does not amount to the levelling of formal charges against any of those named.

Gupta claimed that Sri Lanka's Ranatunga and Aravinda de Silva helped him fix an Indian victory in the Lucknow Test in 1994, for which De Silva was paid 15,000 dollars.

Gupta also says he paid former West Indian captain Brian Lara 40,000 dollars to under-perform in two one-dayers during the tour of India in 1995.

Ex-Test captain Martin Crowe of New Zealand and Alec Stewart of England were also named by Gupta as having taken 20,000 dollars and 5,000 pounds respectively for pitch, weather and team information.

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nalist who was paying him for a series of articles.

"It was obviously an organised scam to collect information and once I realised what was going on, I knocked it on the head."

"I'm shattered that my name is mentioned when you don't know what it's for," Crowe said.

"I'll be more than interested to see what this report says... the only incident I've ever had is with a so-called journalist in 1992."

"That was this guy Gupta who did a couple of articles with me over the phone and then revealed he was a bookie, at which time I told him to piss off and leave me alone... that was about the only contact I've ever had with that part of the world and the first time I've heard of it since, really."

"I've never had any contact with these dudes (bookmakers). It certainly never came into direct contact with the New Zealand cricket team at the time, but we did hear whispers of things from the sub-continent."

New Zealand Cricket chief executive Chris Doig said he was unaware of the content of the report, and would make no comment until he knew the full details.

Alec Stewart

Former England captain Alec Stewart has denied having taken money from a bookmaker after being named in an official Indian report on match-fixing on Wednesday.

Stewart is alleged to have taken 5,000 pounds from an Indian bookmaker for information on pitches and match conditions according to an extract in The Times of a new match-fixing report.

Alec Stewart has fully cooperated with the ECB (England Cricket Board) over this matter, and has categorically denied to Lord MacLaurin, chairman of the ECB, and Tim Lamb, chief executive, that he has ever taken money from Mr (Ajay) Gupta or anyone else, for providing information related to a cricket match," an ECB statement said.

Stewart along with captain Nasser Hussain is not playing in the match.

The tourists attack looked ordinary in the absence of front line pacers Andrew Caddick and Darren Gough and never posed any threats for the home team batsmen.

Left-arm spinner Ashley Giles and leg-spinner Ian Salisbury, on trial to match Pakistani spinners in the upcoming Test series, could only take one wicket between them.

Patron's XI lost openers Imran Abbas (10) and Mohammad Naveed (29) by the 16th over.

Wazim, fighting to regain his Test place, made 29 before falling to Giles.

Left-hander Abbas shared a fifth wicket stand of 67 with Salman Shah who made 19.

Abbas, who hails from a small town Muridke near Lahore, completed his half century in 122 minutes spiced with seven fours.

Yorkshire paceman Matthew Hoggard was the most successful of England's bowler with 3-33.

SCOREBOARD

Scorecard on the first day of the four-day cricket match between England and Patron's XI at Pindi Stadium Wednesday: PATRON'S XI

Naveed c Naveed b Trecothick 29
Abbas c Hick b Hoggard 19
Kamran c Thorpe b Hoggard 15
M Wazim c Hick b Giles 29
Abbas not out 71
Salman c White b Hoggard 17
Qadeer not out 2
Extras: (b-4; lb-4; nb-7) 15
Total: (For 5 wickets in 84 overs) 188

To bat: Mohammad Sami, Mohammad Shafiq, Munir Ansari and Mohammad Akram

Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-44, 3-85, 4-95, 5-162

Bowler O M R W
Hoggard 19 5 33 3
Cork 11 3 30 0
Trecothick 7 2 9 1
White 11 0 42 0
Salisbury 14 4 32 0
Giles 18 6 25 1
Vaughan 3 1 5 0
Thorpe 1 0 4 0

ENGLAND: Graham Thorpe (captain), Michael Atherton, Marcus Trecothick, Graeme Hick, Michael Vaughan, Paul Nixon, Dominic Cork, Ashley Giles, Ian Salisbury, Matthew Hoggard and Craig White.

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BD men win, women lose

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh men's team recorded a comprehensive 3-1 win over Pakistan in the fourth round of the 34th Chess Olympiad in Istanbul yesterday, according to an e-mail received here last night.

In the first board, International Master (IM) Reefat-binsattar beat IM Mahmood Lodhi. IM Ziaur Rahman beat T Gillani in the second while Saifuddin Lovhi won the other board against Mohammad Waqar.

IM Abdullah Al-Rakib was the lone loser going down to Pakistan's K Amir.

On completion of the round, the men's team raised their tally to 9.5 points.

Germany are leading the table with 13.5 points followed by Israel who have 12.5.

In the other fourth round matches, Germany beat Hungary 3-1 while Israel recorded an identical win over Cuba.

In the women's group, Bangladesh were beaten 1-2 by Scotland.

IWM Rani Hamid and Zakia Sultan lost their boards while Nazana Khan Iva managed the lone victory for Bangladesh women's team who have earned only 5 points so far out of possible 12 points.

Georgia are leading the women's table with 10 points.

Delta Life girls' h'ball on

The sixth Delta Life handball championship for girls of different colleges and universities began at the Sultana Kamal Women's Sports Complex at Dharmadhi yesterday, reports BSS.

State Minister for Land Allaj Rasheed Mosharraf inaugurated the tournament as the chief guest. Chairperson of the tournament Principal Hamida Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Handball Federation (BHF) Asaduzzaman Kolunoor and other federation officials were present.

In all 16 halls and colleges, split into four groups, are taking part in the tournament.

On the opening day, Mirpur Girls' Ideal Laboratory Institute and Bangladesh Rifles College won their respective matches.

Mirpur Girls beat Fazul Huq Women's College 13-0. Farzi and Mithun scored four goals each while Jessy netted three goals.

Bangladesh Rifles College defeated Central Women's College 8-2. Parveen netted five goals.

Abbas shines for Patron's

RAWALPINDI, Nov 1: Pakistani teenager Qaiser Abbas sparked with an unbeaten 71 as Patron's XI made 188-5 against England on the first day of the four-day cricket match at Pindi Stadium on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Abbas, 19, who toured Sri Lanka with the Pakistan team last July, played with aplomb hitting nine boundaries in his 192-minute vigil and helped his side recover from a precarious 95-4.

Patron's XI captain Mohammad Wazim won the toss and elected to bat on a day when the focal point was the release of a match-fixing report in India that also named England's most senior player Alec Stewart.

Stewart along with captain Nasser Hussain is not playing in the match.

The tourists attack looked ordinary in the absence of front line pacers Andrew Caddick and Darren Gough and never posed any threats for the home team batsmen.

Left-arm spinner Ashley Giles and leg-spinner Ian Salisbury, on trial to match Pakistani spinners in the upcoming Test series, could only take one wicket between them.

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Trecothick 7 2 9 1
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Salisbury 14 4 32 0
Giles 18 6 25 1
Vaughan 3 1 5 0
Thorpe 1 0 4 0

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Challenger Vladimir Kramnik (L) makes his move against reigning champion Garry Kasparov at the World Chess Championship on October 31.

Kasparov hanging by the thread

LONDON, Nov 1: World chess champion Garry Kasparov held challenger Vladimir Kramnik to a much-needed draw in the World Chess Championships on Tuesday — but with just two games to go, he conceded he would probably lose his crown, reports Reuters.

Trailing his former pupil by two games as he entered the 14th game of the 16-match championships, Kasparov needed a draw at the very least to stay in the series and strive to keep the title he has held for 15 years.

He must now win both of the remaining games if he is to hold the 25-year-old Russian pretender to a draw, and win by default. Under the rules, the defending champion wins in the event of a tie.

But having drawn 12 of the 14 matches the pair have played so far, Kasparov recognises that the odds are against him keeping his unofficial but widely acknowledged title of world champion.

Following an acrimonious split, Kasparov refuses to recognise official world chess body FIDE — though few in the chess world would dispute he has long been world number one.

The chances to win in each game are minimal," Azerbaijan-born Kasparov said after Tuesday's lengthy duel lasting nearly six hours.

"I've thrown so many (chances) away... realistically it is probably not going to happen," he said.

The gruelling series has taken its toll on the 37-year-old champion, who confessed after Sunday's match he was "tired and depressed", saying unspecified "personal reasons" were clouding his play.

He enigmatically promised to outline those reasons once the tournament was over on November 4.

Chess experts were quick to dismiss Kasparov's excuses, saying he had been simply outplayed by the young Russian he first took under his wing at the age of 11 and predicted would be his most likely successor.

"Kasparov has been out prepared and outplayed", chess grandmaster and match commentator Danny King told Reuters. "All Kramnik's (game) openings have been spot on. He's keeping his tactics very tight."

Kasparov may well be rue the comments he made at the outset of the tournament when he forecast he would see "surprises" from the "toughest challenge" he has faced since snatching the title from Russia's Anatoly Karpov in 1985.

Facing a challenger in his early 20s, just as he was when he first beat Karpov, history is mirroring itself for Kasparov — long renowned as the world's most feared chess player.

The hulking, soft-spoken Kramnik — who attended the Botvinnik-Kasparov chess school in Moscow and was chosen as Kasparov's second in his title defence against India's Viswanathan Anand in 1995 — has dominated the tournament.

He has visibly outwitted his former mentor throughout with little-known game strategies and solid defensive play.

The contest has been watched by millions as it has been broadcast live on the Internet at www.braingames.net.

Kramnik has disclosed that he has formulated special mental exercises to banish visions of chess boards that can interrupt his sleep during tense tournaments.

Whether or not Kasparov abdicates during the penultimate game on Thursday, the pair will play the last of the 16 scheduled games at the Riverside Studios in west London on November 4, when the winner will be officially announced.

The \$2 million prize money will then be divided between them, based on the final score.

Agassi, Kuerten advance

STUTTGART, Nov 1 (Xinhua/AP): Andre Agassi of the United States made a winning comeback in tennis court with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Swede Thomas Johansson at the Stuttgart Masters Series on Tuesday.

The former world number one missed the Sydney Olympics to stay close to home with his mother and sister who were fighting with breast cancer and had not played competitive tennis since his shock defeat by Frenchman Arnaud Clement in the second round of the US open last August.

Fourth seed Agassi, who had a bye through to the second round like all seeded players in the prestigious indoor event, relied on his trademark, aggressive baseline play to sweep aside Johansson.

Agassi began 2000 by winning the Australian Open but the rest of the year was disappointing by his own, high standards and