

Warne back to Australia fold

SYDNEY, Jan 6: Shane Warne was Saturday rushed back to international cricket by Australian selectors who also chose new face Nathan Bracken for the one-day triangular series against the West Indies and Zimbabwe, starting next week, reports AFP.

Warne was named in a 13-man Australian squad for the first four matches of the series, which begins with a game between Australia and the West Indies in Melbourne on Thursday.

It was a positive sign for the star leg-spinner, who leaped incumbent Test spinner Stuart MacGill and Colin Miller for his first international match since recovering from a broken bowling finger.

Bracken, a left-arm quick from New South Wales, was chosen for his international debut after playing just 10 first-class matches.

The 23-year-old was the only major surprise in the squad, which included recalled South Australian batsman Darren Lehmann, Queensland all-rounder Andrew Symonds and West Australian batsman Damien Martyn.

Test fast bowler Brett Lee was also chosen but he must prove he has overcome the back problems which forced him out of the final three Tests against the West Indies.

His Test bowling partner Jason Gillespie has suffered another injury setback with a left hamstring problem forcing him out and opening the door for Victorian all-rounder Ian Harvey.

Harvey had been selected in a 12-man Australia A squad to be led by rising West Australian Simon Katich for limited-over matches against the West Indies and Zimbabwe next week.

Queensland swing bowler Adam Dale replaced Harvey.

Test players Matthew Hayden, Michael Slater, Andy Bichel and Stuart MacGill were included in the second team along with Victorian swing bowler Damien Fleming, who is also returning from injury.

AUSTRALIA: Steve Waugh (captain), Adam Gilchrist (vice-captain), Michael Bevan, Nathan Bracken, Ian Harvey, Brett Lee, Darren Lehmann, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Ricky Ponting, Andrew Symonds, Shane Warne, Mark Waugh.

AUSTRALIA A: Simon Katich (captain), Matthew Hayden (vice-captain), Wade Secombe, Michael Slater, Brad Hodge, Greg Blewett, Adam Dale, Shaun Lee, Andrew Bichel, Stuart MacGill, Damien Fleming, Paul Wilson.

Walsh wills to finish at home

SYDNEY, Jan 6: Courtney Walsh has agreed to play a final home series for the West Indies after narrowly failing to become the first player in history to capture 500 Test wickets during the team's tour of Australia, reports Reuters.

The 38-year-old fast bowler arrived in Australia with a world record tally of 483 Test victims and needing just 17 more victims to reach the magical figure.

But Walsh managed only 11 wickets during the series despite bowling well, leaving him tantalisingly close to the fantastic 500.

And despite being on the receiving end of a 5-0 series whitewash, the evergreen paceman said he would happily go around one last time in the upcoming home series with South Africa but said he would definitely not tour again.

"I'm keen to finish at home," Walsh said after the West Indies lost the fifth Test to Australia by six wickets today.

"The last Test is in Jamaica so if I get my wish I'll play my last Test at home."

Walsh said he was disappointed not to get the remaining 17 dismissals he needed to reach 500 after capturing 34 wickets at 12.82 on last year's tour of England but not with the way he bowled.

While the Australian batsmen punished the other West Indian bowlers, Walsh managed to stop the run flow with his persistent line and length even though he didn't get many wickets.

"Of course I was a little disappointed I didn't get 500 wickets but I gave it everything I had and I was happy with the way I played," he said.

Bird injures his finger

LONDON, Jan 6: (Internet report): Dickie Bird is suffering from repetitive strain injury, and any bowler who has appealed for an lbw to the retired Test umpire will know that it is not because he raises his finger too much.

In fact the injury is due to signing tens of thousands of copies of latest book. The former Test match umpire has been in big demand at signing sessions in the UK, Australia and New Zealand since the tome, entitled White Cap and Balls was published.

He finally pulled up with a problem with his right hand after a massive pre-Christmas signing session in Milton Keynes, at which he autographed more than 1,700 copies of the book.

The 67-year-old told the Daily Mail: "I don't just sign my name, I write messages and good wishes. At the end of the session, I felt faint with the pain and couldn't even hold a pen. Now I've been told the only cure is rest."



Members of the Bangladesh Chess Federation during its second Annual General Meeting at the National Sports Council Conference Room yesterday. A total of one hundred and five councilors attended the meeting.

Campbell confusion

LONDON, Jan 6: Tottenham defender Sol Campbell is at the centre of a transfer storm with his Premiership club here after reports appeared in the press suggesting that the England international was on his way out of the London club, reports AFP.

The row centres on Campbell claiming that Tottenham did not offer him a new deal, and that club management had not done enough to keep him at White Hart Lane.

Campbell, who last week verbally pledged his future to the club, on Friday said he felt "hurt" at not being offered a new deal.

However, club chairman Sir Alan Sugar has rubbished Campbell's claims and said he was "absolutely astounded" to read Campbell's gripes in the English media.

Sugar, in a statement released by the club, said: "His latest comments make me, David Pleat and George Graham (manager) come across as

idiots or, even worse, liars. "Everyone in football knows we have been desperately trying to keep him. The fans are not stupid and he should not try to make fools of them."

Earlier Friday Graham urged talks with Campbell to work out a deal after the England defender last week pledged his future verbally with Spurs.

He said: "My attitude is let's get them round the table and get some serious talking done."

Campbell's statement released late last Sunday initially quelled speculation that he was set to quit White Hart Lane in the summer on a free transfer as he told supporters: "I'm going nowhere."

As of last Monday Campbell is free to negotiate with any clubs due to the Bosman transfer ruling and Manchester United were said to be favourites to sign him, though Valencia of Spain were also reportedly putting together a package to tempt him abroad.

But in his New Year statement the 26-year-old Campbell said he is happy to stay put.

"I want to play for Tottenham - that's it. I've been here for so long and there's no reason to think I would want to leave."

"For me to do well at this club would mean everything. I play for Spurs with a passion and desire, and it hurts me when we lose."

Sugar, however, sees this latest twist in Campbell's seemingly fragile loyalty as simply mind-boggling.

He said late on Friday: "With the ongoing saga of Campbell's future with rumours of him going to Manchester, then abroad on a Bosman (transfer), does Sol think anyone is going to believe what he is saying?"

"Everyone in football knows we have been desperately trying to keep him. "I am disappointed he has chosen the media to pass messages to the club. If he wants us to make an offer we are delighted to do so."

"But the fans must not be misled by his recent comments. They are hurtful and, for the life of me, I can't understand why he has said them."

SFA prefers silence

GLASGOW, Jan 6: The Scottish Football Association (SFA) have refused to comment on St Johnstone's decision to sack drugs incident pair George O'Boyle and Kevin Thomas, subject to any possible appeal by the players, reports AFP.

O'Boyle and Thomas were sacked on Friday after it was reported that they had been caught by a club official taking cocaine in a toilet cubicle at a Christmas party.

Both players, along with their legal representatives, held long discussions with club officials on Friday but their contracts were terminated with immediate effect.

O'Boyle and Thomas, who have both been on the team's injury list for most of this season, could yet make an appeal.

However as St Johnstone's managing director Stewart Duff earlier spelled out the dangers of drug abuse, SFA spokesman Andy Mitchell warned that players caught using banned substances face lengthy bans from the game.

"Firstly, this is a disciplinary action which is obviously a matter for the club," said Mitchell.

"As there is a right of appeal to the football authorities against a disciplinary decision by a club, it would be inappropriate for the SFA to comment on the circumstances of this particular case at this time."

"But, in general terms, the SFA want to make it absolutely clear that drugs in football are unacceptable."

"Any player found guilty of using banned substances faces

the prospect of a lengthy suspension from football and, for any repeated offence, a lifetime ban from the game."

Duff claimed that the decision owed much to teaching youngsters of the dangers of drugs and the reputation of the club.

"Scottish football has implemented an anti-doping programme to ensure that players of member clubs are not involved in the use of prohibited substances and St Johnstone Football Club takes a pride in portraying itself as a family club," said Duff.

He added: "In reaching this decision, St Johnstone Football Club is aware of its responsibilities towards its employees and, in particular, to our younger players."

Today's hearing at the club's McDiarmid Park ground in Perth was chaired by Jim Donachie, a non-executive director at the club.

Like the SFA, the Scottish Premier League (SPL) refused to comment directly on St Johnstone's decision.

SPL chief executive Roger Mitchell said: "As the body to which the players can appeal, the SPL cannot comment directly on the case. But, in general terms, we deplore everything to do with illegal drug-taking."

The apparent increase in drug-taking in society as a whole is something that administrators in all sports, including football, must be aware of.

"We are always closely monitoring the situation and if it is felt that further measures are required then it will be raised on a cross-body basis with the SFA and the SPL."

O'Boyle, a former Northern Ireland international with 13 caps, joined Saint Johnstone in 1994 after five years with Dunfermline. The 33-year-old forward has struggled with serious groin and knee injuries for the last two years.

Recently, after surgeons battled to save his career from the injury, O'Boyle required an abdominal operation.

Thomas, 25, a former Hearts and Morton forward, was out for the rest of the season after undergoing an knee ligament operation.

Bari's teenage star Antonio Cassano - regarded as the hottest emerging talent in Italian football - is the likely target of that sortie but on Sunday Martin Ferguson - brother of Sir Alex and United chief scout - is accredited for the match in Bergamo between home favourites Atalanta and Serie A leaders AS Roma.

Corriere dello Sport reports that the intended target is 29-year-old striker Cristiano Dotti - a player whose excellent form has propelled the unfashionable side into third place in Serie A but whose season has been tarnished by his implication in a match-fixing scandal.

Dotti is by no means the only member of the Atalanta side to impress this season though, and Emesto Rossini, the Zenon twins Damiano and Cristiano and Nicola Ventola could also be under scrutiny.

On the Roma side striker Vincenzo Montella - who will get a rare start on Sunday as Gabriel Batistuta is injured - has made no secret of the fact that he is unhappy at his lack of opportunities since the arrival of Argentina's hirsute hit-

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FedEx Cup golf held

SAVAR, Jan 6: Faisal Khan and Shamim Ara Begum emerged men's and women's champions respectively in the FedEx Cup golf tournament-2001 which concluded at the Savar Golf Club today, reports UNB.

Army Chief and President of Savar Golf Club Lt Gen M Harun-ur-Rashid distributed prizes at the closing ceremony in the afternoon.

In the men's group, MH Samad and RC Baral became the first runner-up and second runner-up respectively while Hamida Salam finished runner-up in the women's group.

Major General S Anwer Ali and Tanver Madar became the senior winner and senior runner-up in the meet.

Besides, Masud Ahmed and Brigadier General Habib emerged as the best gross and second best gross winners. Shawkat-ud-Zaman was awarded the nearest to the pin prize while Sabher Alzal received the award for the longest drive.

A total of 155 golfers including 19 women from Kurmitola, Bhatary, Jessore, Mainamati, Ordnance Factory and the hosts Savar Golf Club took part in the tourney, also participated by some golfers from abroad.

2002 WC ARD, ZDF to buy rights

MUNICH, Jan 6: The German public television channels ARD and ZDF plan to buy some of the broadcasting rights for the football 2002 World Cup from media giant Kirch for a record 225 million marks (115 million euros, 109 million dollars), the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported on Friday, says AFP.

"We can confirm that we've reached agreement in principle with ARD and ZDF. We will release a statement about the details of the deal soon," a Kirch spokesman told AFP.

He declined to comment further, on either the amount of money changing hands or the date when the deal would be announced.

The newspaper report, quoting an executive from ARD, said that ARD and ZDF would buy the rights for 24 of the 64 matches, to be held in Japan and South Korea, for a record 10 million marks per match.

The purchase would include the rights for the opening game, the semi-finals and the final, it added.

All because of Emerson's foot

LYON, France, Jan 6: Brazilian international defender Emerson will not be joining French First Division side Lyon from Brazilian club Portuguesa after he failed a medical, Lyon announced Friday, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old Emerson, capped six times for Brazil, underwent a medical at Lyon here Wednesday and was found to have inflammation of the muscles on one of his feet.

The club said that although the injury was "not serious", it could "reider the player unavailable for a number of weeks."

Lyon are still on the lookout for a central defender due to the lay-off of injured Florent Laville, who is out for the rest of the season after undergoing a knee ligament operation.

The club's Polish defender Jacek Bak also remains unavailable after suffering a back injury in August.

Not always Sir Alex

MILAN, Jan 6: Family members look set to replace Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson in scouting trips to two of Italy's less fashionable clubs this weekend, reports AFP.

At first it was reported that Ferguson himself would be in attendance at Vicenza for the home club's match with Bari on Saturday afternoon - United play First Division Fulham in the FA Cup on Sunday.

But a spokesman for Vicenza said that the accreditation for the match at the Stadio Romeo Menti was in the name of Jason Ferguson, the son of the United coach.

Bari's teenage star Antonio Cassano - regarded as the hottest emerging talent in Italian football - is the likely target of that sortie but on Sunday Martin Ferguson - brother of Sir Alex and United chief scout - is accredited for the match in Bergamo between home favourites Atalanta and Serie A leaders AS Roma.

Corriere dello Sport reports that the intended target is 29-year-old striker Cristiano Dotti - a player whose excellent form has propelled the unfashionable side into third place in Serie A but whose season has been tarnished by his implication in a match-fixing scandal.

Dotti is by no means the only member of the Atalanta side to impress this season though, and Emisto Rossini, the Zenon twins Damiano and Cristiano and Nicola Ventola could also be under scrutiny.

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Chief of Army Staff Lt. General M Harun-ur-Rashid distributing prizes among the winners of the FedEx Cup golf tournament at the Savar Golf Club yesterday.

Angel has no wings

LONDON, Jan 6: Aston Villa's financial director Mark Ansell has revealed that he made an 11th hour bid to save the transfer of Juan Pablo Angel from collapsing reports AFP.

However the desperate move was not enough to bring the player's transfer to fruition and the 25-year-old Colombian international will remain in the meantime, with Argentinian side River Plate.

Problems emerged with the manner in which the player's agents, who retain possession of the player's registration, wanted the transfer monies to be paid - which the Football Association (FA) told Villa does not comply with FIFA regulations' and ruled it could not go ahead.

It is believed that problems originate from the fact that Angel's agent Gustavo Mascardi owns half of his client's contract which is against FIFA policy.

The 9.5million deal fell through after the Football Association refused to register Angel following the intervention of world governing body FIFA.

Villa were asked to pay the fee to two different clubs and

FIFA made it clear this could not happen. The agent handling the deal also requested that Villa make a payment to Angel's former club in Colombia.

Ansell said: "I spoke to Argentina in the early hours of this morning, pleading with them in order to have one contract between us and River Plate so that they could then sort out the Colombian club in their own way."

Villa boss John Gregory, who had been closely tracking the promising striker with 30 goals from 40 games under his belt over the past two seasons for River Plate, was said to be "extremely disappointed" at the latest setback in his season-long search for a new striker.

Last season's FA Cup finalists released a statement to explain the failure of the deal.

"Aston Villa are unable to conclude the transfer of Juan Pablo Angel from River Plate. This is because FIFA refuse to accept the structure and method of payment required by the owners of the player's registration."

Ansell has also revealed that Villa first became concerned about the deal following two days of talks in London be-

tween the club and Angel's agent shortly after manager Gregory had decided he wanted to sign Angel.

He added: "When we came to an agreement they said that they wanted the transaction structured in a different manner."

"We warned them that this was unusual and that under our new regulations in the UK all monies had to be fed through the FA."

"We then notified the FA and worked hard to get the work permit. We got the permit and continued to try and negotiate with River Plate, not in regards to the money, but in the way it was structured."

"We had talks with the FA yesterday. I spoke to the agent in Argentina and pleaded with him to enable the transaction to go through between River Plate and Aston Villa."

"They have refused to do so and the FA have said they will not allow the registration."

Villa's latest run of ill-luck comes on the heels of Gregory's failed bid for Celta Vigo's South African international striker Benny McCarthy which turned sour after what Gregory saw as exaggerated transfer demands.

They really missed it

LONDON, Jan 6: Manchester United striker Dwight Yorke says the English champions are even more determined to win the FA Cup because they had to withdraw from last season's competition, reports AFP.

United play their first FA Cup game since winning the 1999 final when the Premiership leaders face first division leaders Fulham at Craven Cottage on Sunday.

Yorke said the players were bitterly disappointed to be denied the chance to defend the trophy last year after the club pulled out to compete in FIFA's World Club Championship in January.

"The FA Cup is just special," he said. "The FA Cup is always special and it's just something we want to win after being excluded last year."

"We would have liked to have defended it, but that was down to the plc (public limited company) of Manchester United."

"We are their employees and we just go out there and play wherever they want us to play. It was disappointing watching the final because we wanted to defend the FA Cup as we were the holders."

"We've got a chance to get it back this year and that's what we want to do."

Yorke is full of respect for Jean Tigana's side and French striker Louis Saha.

"Fantastic," said Yorke. "He's scored nearly 20 goals already this season."

"Obviously we have got to respect the way they play, but if we play to our full potential then we don't need any sort of encouragement to go out and play."

United's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Fabien Barthez has flu, so 37-year-old Raimond van der Gouw will make his FA Cup debut.

Fulham's Danish international Bjarne Goldback, who played against United in the FA Cup for Chelsea the season before last, believes an upset is possible.

"Of course we have a chance as we have so much confidence and we are the leaders of the first division," he said.

"United are the big favourites, they have many world-class players, they are by far the best team in the Premier League and there is a big gap. But I still think you can close that gap if you can give 100 percent on the day and they have an off-day."

"Our strengths are that we are technically a good team for the First Division. Now we'll see whether that's good enough for the Premier League as well. We have created a lot of goals this season as well."

"The team has improved a lot since I joined, but the club has grown as well. You can see that everything is growing here every day."

This year's FA Cup final is being played on May 12 at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium while a new Wembley stadium is being built.

German booter banished

SINGAPORE, Jan 6: German footballer Lutz Pfannenstiel was Saturday jailed for five months for accepting 18,000 Singapore dollars (10,400 US) in bribes to rig three S-league matches in Singapore, reports AFP.

The former Geylang United goalkeeper, who had arrived at court saying he feared the worst, wept and hugged his girlfriend before being led away to join his flatmate Mirko Jurilj, who was jailed last month on similar charges.

Both players had faced a maximum sentence of five years in jail and a 100,000 Singapore dollar fine.

Pfannenstiel had cut off his trademark ponytail in expectation of a prison sentence after being found guilty on Thursday of letting a 28-year-old bookmaker Sivakumar Madasamy place bets on his behalf.

Although the German had denied the charges and said he only gave Madasamy his 'professional opinion' on the possible outcome of matches, the judge said Pfannenstiel had initiated the scheme.

Madasamy had testified that he offered to place bets on behalf of both Pfannenstiel and Jurilj and they could collect any winnings.

He said he outlaid 22,000 dollars in three bets for Jurilj, but the money was lost when the results did not go as planned.

Jurilj, an Australian who played for Sembawang Rang-

ers, signed a confession while in custody, which he later claimed was made under duress.

Pfannenstiel said he had not signed a confession.

Both players were arrested during a widespread investigation which exposed the corrupt side of football in gambling-obsessed Singapore.

During Jurilj's trial, the court heard that a game had been "counter-fixed" after Madasamy placed a bet for a draw and Sembawang won 2-1.

England international Wise, 34, who has been at the club for the past 10 years, is understood to be still mulling over his future despite a report that he will hand in a transfer request next week.

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Czech midfielder star Karel Poborsky (R) and Lazio vice-president Dino Zoff display the player's jersey after the former signed an 18-month contract with the Serie A side on January 5.

AFP photo