

Pakistan bring Pybus back

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Tuesday confirmed South African-based Englishman Richard Pybus as their head coach for the tour of England starting later this week.

"We have finally engaged Richard Pybus as head coach for the tour of England," PCB chairman Lieutenant General Iqbal Zia told this news agency.

Pakistan's hunt for a new coach took nearly a month after they dumped former coach Javed Miandad for a poor showing in last month's New Zealand tour.

"Pybus' contract could be extended after the England tour but we want to see how he performs and he too wants to have short tour after what happened with him the last time," he said.

"They approached me at the beginning of last week," said Pybus. "I've had a good chat with (captain) Waqar (Younis) on the phone and he is pretty upbeat and confident about the way things are."

Pybus was sacked mid-way through his contract in 1999 after Pakistan lost to Australia 3-0.

He was initially hired as trainer for Pakistan team in the 1999 World Cup.

Pybus, 40, had played minor counties for Norfolk in England and is currently coaching South African state side Border.

Pakistan has also engaged Australian Daryl Foster as bowling coach cum consultant for the England tour.

ACB ropes in new faces

AFP, Sydney

Queensland paceman Ashley Noffke was the surprise recipient when the Australian Cricket Board announced its list of contracted players for the 2001-02 season Tuesday.

The 24-year-old Noffke was among 25 players awarded the contracts along with other additions paceman Nathan Bracken and batsman Martin Love.

While they were celebrating their national recognition, Andrew Bichel, Michael Kasprowicz, Matthew Elliott and Michael Younis were not offered new deals.

New South Wales' quick Bracken was handed the contract after making his international debut last season.

Noffke has played just six first-class matches but his man-of-the-match performance in the Sheffield Shield cricket final in March helped him bump out teammates Kasprowicz and Bichel.

Noffke, who has been likened to Australian spearhead Glenn McGrath for his bowling rhythm and build, had even figured in discussions for this year's Ashes tour to England.



WILL IT SEE LIGHT? A computer-generated image of the would-be Wembley Stadium.

Wembley heading for doom?

Football

AFP, London

English football's governing body the Football Association (FA) admitted Tuesday that the Wembley Stadium project is doomed to failure unless the British government bail's it out.

However, a spokesman for No 10 Downing Street warned the FA that they could not rely on more government money.

"We have made it clear that we remain committed to the proposals for a new national stadium and we will work with the various authorities to look at different options but that doesn't mean the Government can simply write blank cheques to act as a national bank for projects which encounter funding difficulties," he told the Press Association Tuesday.

"The Government cannot step in as a banker of last resort."

New Wembley, a 475-million-pound (698-million-dollar) scheme has been beset by problems over the past two years and, having failed to secure adequate funding from the City of London, FA chief executive Adam Crozier assumed more responsibility for

the project, which was initially supposed to be completed in time for the 2003 FA Cup.

However, demolition work has still not been started, with only 120 million pounds (176 million dollars) of public money via Sport England, the government funding agency, having so far been received.

But 20 million pounds (29million dollars) of that grant is due to be repaid as the new stadium will not stage athletics events as originally planned.

"It is clear that escalating costs - which have risen from 334 million pounds (490 million dollars) to 660 million pounds (970 million dollars) - have played a key role."

"Given it is clear that the FA cannot complete its project, the government has decided to examine all the options that are available.

The FA's announcement is the latest in a long line of setbacks and controversies that have beset the new Wembley project.

"We cannot act as the sole sponsor of the scheme," an FA spokesman told the Press Association Tuesday. "Neither sports governing bodies, nor banks will take the risks associated with such a project.

"The scale of the commitment required (to take sole charge of the project) would put our own future in jeopardy and the development of football throughout the country," admitted the FA.

"The finance needed also far exceeds what the private sector can bear."

Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport said: "The government regrets the Football Association's decision to

withdraw its support for the current plans for the redevelopment of Wembley Stadium.

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Chess team off to Colombo

SPORTS REPORTER

A six-member Bangladesh chess team left for Colombo on Wednesday to take part in the qualifying round of the World Chess Championship.

The Zone 3.1 B qualifying round, also involving India and hosts Sri Lanka, commences from May 4 to 14 in Katunayaka, Sri Lanka.

There are four men and two women in the team. The group includes International Master Reeft-bin-Sattar, Fide Master Enamul Hossain, Taibor Rahman, Abu Sufian Shakil, International Woman Master Rani Hamid and Woman Fide Master Tanima Parveen.

'Give Akhtar a break'

REUTERS, London

England captain Nasser Hussain has offered his support to Pakistan pace bowler Shoaib Akhtar, arguing it is time to bury the controversy over his bowling action.

Hussain, whose side host Pakistan in a two-Test series starting this month, said it was time to end the uncertainty over the 25-year-old's future in the sport.

"Let's get on with it," he said.

"I'm a bit tired of chopping and changing, one from the other, yes he chuckles it, no he doesn't."

"He seems to be eligible to bowl, he's not a thrower and that's it as far as I'm concerned," he told Sky Television.

Hussain said Akhtar was a key member of Pakistan's world-class pace attack, adding: "You have a lad's career in the balance. I know if it was me I particularly wouldn't like it."

India go to SL July 15

REUTERS, New Delhi

India will play three Tests during their 50-day tour of Sri Lanka starting in July, as well as taking part in a triangular one-day series also involving New Zealand.

The match venues have yet to be announced.

INDIAN CRICKET

July 15: Arrival in Colombo.

July 18: Sri Lanka v New Zealand.

July 19: India v New Zealand.

July 21: Sri Lanka v India.

July 24: Sri Lanka v New Zealand.

July 25: Sri Lanka v India.

July 26: India v New Zealand.

July 29: New Zealand v Sri Lanka.

July 31: Sri Lanka v India.

Aug 2: India v New Zealand.

Aug 4: Tri-series final.

Aug 8-10: Three-day match.

Aug 13-17: 1st Test.

Aug 21-25: 2nd Test.

Aug 29-Sept 2: 3rd Test.

Sept 3: Departure from Colombo.

The most gripping finish on the second day of matches in the 50 overs competition came at Edgbaston where defending champions Glamorgan snatched a last-ball win over Warwickshire.

Chris Taylor smashed Warwickshire's new overseas player, West Indian Vasbert Drakes, for four off the final delivery to level the scores. Gloucestershire snatched a last-ball win over Warwickshire.

With Somerset needing 233 for victory, Trescotich hit 10 fours as he paved the way to success in a second-wicket stand of 121 with Keith Dutch, their close-season signing from Middlesex, who scored 55 from 87 deliveries.

Somerset eased home at 233 for four with three of their 50 overs in hand after Glamorgan had made 232 for six, to which Michael Powell contributed the top score of 67.

In the Edgbaston thriller, Warwickshire managed 213 for nine, thanks mainly to Dominic Ostler (77) and new captain Michael

Lankan duo quizzed

Cricket

AGENCIES, Colombo

ICC investigators have grilled Sri Lanka's ex-skipper Arjuna Ranatunga and his deputy Aravinda de Silva in a probe that goes beyond match-fixing allegations originally made against them.

The International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) questioned de Silva on Tuesday and questioning of Ranatunga was underway Wednesday, local investigator Desmond Fernando said.

The two players were implicated in last year's Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) report that named several other international players too.

De Silva was questioned by Fernando as well as the chief investigator of the ICC's anti-corruption panel, Jeff Rees, and fellow investigator Alan Peacock.

"Questions suggested by the New Zealand (cricket) Board and Mr. Martin Crowe's counsel was also put to Mr. de Silva," Fernando said without elaborating on what the questions were.

The former New Zealand skipper Crowe has admitted receiving 7,500 dollars for what he believed was a series of media articles, but broke contact when he realised it was a scam involving an Indian bookmaker.

It has been alleged that Crowe

was introduced to bookmakers by de Silva.

Ranatunga and de Silva are accused in the CBI report of taking bribes to engineer a Sri Lankan Test against India at Lucknow. The report contained testimony from an Indian bookmaker who alleged he gave 15,000 dollars to de Silva but it was not clear if money had also been given to Ranatunga.

Ranatunga has flatly denied the charges of corruption while de Silva maintained that he never took bribes, although he was approached by bookmakers.

The head of the ICC anti-corruption panel, former Scotland Yard chief Sir Paul Condon, said that international players named in the Indian match-fixing probe would be investigated beyond the charges made public against them.

Asked whether the inquiry would be confined to the Indian CBI report, Sir Paul said it would also look into matters not mentioned by the Indian investigators.

"There would be a whole realm of charges and not confined to the CBI report ... It will expand to further material that would not be in the public domain."

Condon who was here on a brief visit since Saturday said all Test-playing nations were affected by the allegations.

It was not immediately clear if more players were under investigation and the nature of the new investigation line, but Condon

said they had collected an enormous amount of information on how matches were fixed.

Sir Paul also made it clear that he will not preside over a whitewash and no effort would be spared to clean up the game. He said match-fixing had been going on for about 20 years.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Cricket Board on Wednesday said ICC investigators would visit the country later this month to probe allegations of match-fixing.

PCB director Munawar Rana said the ICC team would be headed by Condon.

He did not give the date of the team's arrival in Pakistan.

Rana also said, openers Saeed Anwar and Shahid Afridi were interviewed by last month by Emirates Cricket Board investigators during the Airtel Gold Cup tournament. ACU officials were present during the session.

Roddick rolls on

AFP, Houston

Teenager Andy Roddick, already tagged as the future of American tennis, breezed into the second round of the 400,000-dollars US Clay Court Championships here Tuesday.

Roddick scored a 6-3, 6-4 win against Raemon Sluiter of the Netherlands for the second time in two weeks. He beat Sluiter in the first round last week in Atlanta on his way to his first ATP title.

Powell (55) adding 136 for the fifth wicket.

The home county were contained by some penetrative bowling from Australian all-rounder Ian Harvey, who finished with five for 32 and the man-of-the-match award.

Robert Cunliffe (75) and Kim Barnett (34) provided the platform for Gloucestershire's reply before Matt Windows (42), skipper Mark Alleyne (26) and Taylor (six not out) fashioned a frenetic finish which saw them make the 10 runs needed off the final over to tie the scores at 213 for six.

Durham caused the first major Cup upset of the season with a convincing 54-run victory over four-times winners Lancashire at Liverpool.

Lancashire paraded a near full array of past and present Test players including newly-arrived Sri Lankan off-spinner Muthiah Muralitharan.

But after restricting Durham to 193 for seven in their 50 overs, the home side never recovered from losing their first four wickets for 39 runs, all to Neil Killeen.

Paceman Killeen had Lancashire's first three batsmen, Mike Atherton (7), John Crawley (4) and Joe Scuderi (11), all caught at first slip by Durham's new overseas player, Australian Martin Love.

Love was celebrating being one of two newcomers named by the Australian Cricket Board on Tuesday among their annual list of 25 contracted players.

There was no way back for Lancashire after Danny Lighton weighed in with the wickets of Neil Fairbrother (22) and Graham Lloyd (13) as they tumbled to 139 all out in 40 overs.

Killeen finished with his best Benson and Hedges return of four for 18 in eight overs.

Muralitharan had struck an early blow for Lancashire by dismissing Queenslander Love for 16 while conceding only 19 runs in his 10.

But opener Jimmy Daley completed a maiden half-century in the competition with the top score of 70 to pave the way for Durham's first win over Lancashire in any competition since 1992.

Magura cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Shahid Mintu Sangha and Sototto Mittu (Yellow) moved into the final of the Begum Wazeda Ahmed Memorial Gold Cup cricket tournament at the local stadium on Wednesday.

Mintu Sangha defeated Sototto Mittu (Blue) by 46 runs in the first semifinal.