

'Don't panic Cronje'

REUTERS, London

Reports that Hansie Cronje and other players found guilty of match-fixing could be written out of cricketing history have been qualified as "completely speculative" by the sport's world governing body.

The International Cricket Council responded on Monday after newspaper reports suggested that an interim investigation by the ICC's anti-corruption unit would recommend that players' names should be removed from the record books.

ICC spokesman Mark Harrison said: "That's completely speculative and has not come from the competition.

"The (Anti-Corruption) Unit's report is not in the public domain...it has not been published or leaked."

The investigation, headed by former London Metropolitan police chief Paul Condon, has taken six months to date and focuses on match-fixing took hold.

It is due to be presented to the ICC's code of conduct commission next week and will then be published before being presented to the world governing body's executive board in June.

Three former national captains -- South African Cronje, Mohammad Azharuddin of India and Salim Malik of Pakistan -- have been banned for life by their national boards after the scandal broke last year. All were charged with having links with bookmakers.

Cronje, who blamed his downfall on Satan, has challenged his ban, which not only outlawed him from playing but also barred him from further contact with the sport in South Africa.

Cronje argued that it would stop him from coaching underprivileged children in particular.

Azharuddin, regarded as one of the most gifted batsmen of his generation, played in 99 Tests and 334 one-day internationals. He launched his career in 1984 with three centuries in consecutive matches.

Cronje played in 68 Tests and 188 one-dayers while Malik played 103 Tests and 283 one-dayers.

The anti-corruption unit has visited Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Sharjah and Sri Lanka, as well as supporting investigations in England, Pakistan and West Indies.

Barnett tops 'em all

 Cricket
AFP, London

were never in the hunt and folded for 131 in pursuit of Derbyshire's 198.

Zac Morris celebrated his Hampshire Hawks debut by taking three Worcestershire Royals wickets and then hit the winning boundary with two balls to spare.

Worcestershire were restricted to 183 for seven as a crowd of around 1,500 witnessed Norwich Union League cricket for the first time at Hampshire's new Rose Bowl ground.

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222-5 (K Barnett 101) v Northamptonshire 108-3 (M Hussey 53)

Result: Gloucestershire beat Northamptonshire by 20 runs (Duckworth-Lewis Method)

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