

Lankan cricket body faces probe

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan Sports Minister Lakshman Kiriella has appointed a five-member panel to probe the activities of the cricket control board he sacked in March triggering a spate of court cases.

The head of the five-member panel, Hemantha Warnakulasuriya, said he had been asked to investigate allegations of corruption amid charges of financial mismanagement by the sacked board which was headed by Thi-
lanka Sumithpala.

There are lots of allegations made in newspapers and here and there, but what we are saying is that if any affiliated club or individual has any information or complaint to get in touch with us," Warnakulasuriya said.

The minister appointed an interim panel to run the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) in March.

However, the interim panel went into a spin when a court ordered last week that it should not operate the bank accounts until a case filed by sacked Sumithpala is heard on June 1.

The sports ministry has said it will fund the cricket board until the legal obstacles are cleared.

The interim-panel recently announced that they were carrying out an audit to find out how much money was in the kitty when the previous committee was sacked in March.

The latest probe is in addition to the audit.

The sports minister charged that the sacked board did not submit its accounts a month ahead of its annual meet as required and presented the accounts only about two weeks before the annual general meeting.

Sumithpala said the Colombo Commercial Court ruling had vindicated his stand and he was pressing the authorities to restore democratic elections and have a new committee appointed to run the BCCSL.

SA physio says sorry

Reuters, Cape Town

South African team physiologist Craig Smith and five players got "carried away" celebrating the recent series victory over West Indies by smoking marijuana in an hotel room, Smith said on Saturday.

"I suppose we got a little carried away with our celebrations and our jubilation," Smith said. "I think at the time we probably knew that what we were doing wasn't right."

"In your own private life you can do what you want but it's unacceptable when you are representing your country. We realise that it was something that shouldn't have been done and we're regretful that it happened."

Smith and the quintet of cricketers - Herschelle Gibbs, Roger Telemachus, Andre Nel, Paul Adams and Justin Kemp - were fined 10,000 rand (1,250 dollars) and given a severe reprimand.

Smith, back at his home in Cape Town, added: "I believe that in every situation, something can be turned around and we can bring a 'right' out of a 'wrong.'

"Some of us feel that we can change the public's perception of this incident and do some work in the field of drug or alcohol addiction."

Bracewell on the attack

Reuters, London

Gloucestershire coach John Bracewell hit out at England's selectors on Saturday for not picking any of his players in the one-day squad for the Triangular series against Australia and Pakistan next month.

Gloucestershire have dominated the domestic limited-overs game over the last two seasons, retaining both the NatWest Trophy and Benson and Hedges Cup last summer when they also won the National League title.

The team are also through to the semi-finals of this year's Benson and Hedges Cup, prompting the former New Zealand spin bowler to accuse the selectors of a "collective conspiracy" in ignoring the claims of England A team captain Mark Alleyne and pacer Jon Lewis.

"It's a disgrace and I'm shocked at their non-selection," he said.

Silvia's maiden crown

AFP, Strasbourg

Italy's Silvia Farina Elia won the first tournament of her professional career in the WTA event here on Saturday when she beat Germany's Anke Huber 7-5, 6-4.

The 29-year-old Italian, ranked 28th in the world, was delighted with her win which follows a steady season of progress on clay and bodes well for the French Open, which begins on Monday.

Kuerten the man to beat

French Open starts today

C Tennis

AFP, Paris

Defending champion Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil said Sunday that he was fit and confident as he launches his bid for a third French Open title in the Grand Slam tournament which gets underway here Monday.

Despite a tough start with an opening tie against up-and-coming Argentinian Guillermo Coria, top-seeded Kuerten said that he had prepared well for the tournament and was back in form.

Nagging back and thigh ailments had dogged his progress more recently and in the Tennis Masters Series in Hamburg he went out in the first round to Max Mirnyi of Belarus.

After Hamburg it was the first time since Indian Wells that I really practised hard and tried to get something for my body during practice. I could say I'm in perfect condition, but there's always a doubt," said Kuerten.

And the 24-year-old Kuerten knows that his opening match against the 19-year-old Coria will be one of his toughest.



GUSTAVO KUERTEN

"I have a good chance," added Kuerten of securing a third title. "Especially if I get myself into the fourth round or the final."

Roland Garros changed Kuerten's life four years ago when he arrived from nowhere and won the singles title by crushing two-time champion Sergi Bruguera of Spain in straight sets in the final.

And he now has nothing to prove on the slow red clay here after winning his second title on

his 11th match point against Swede Magnus Norman last year. He went on to become the first Latin American ever to end the year ranked number one in the world.

"I saw that match for the first time a couple of days ago. It was amazing," admitted Kuerten. "From the first match point until the end it was almost an hour."

"With the Masters Cup last year it was one of the three highest moments of my life."

And winning the second title was even sweeter than the first, he said.

"The first one just happened. It was something that happened to me. It was great."

"I think the second one was much more. I proved to myself. I came here to play at the biggest level with the big players."

With 1999 title-winner Andre Agassi in the twilight of his career, Russian Marat Safin inconsistent and Spaniard Juan Carlos Ferrero uncertain with an abductor strain Kuerten appears the favourite.

And after the French Open the Brazilian plans to rest and skip the grass courts of Wimbledon.

"It would be a good time for me to rest a little. After Hamburg I had time to rest and I feel better now. But I still feel that I still have to recover a bit and rest and have treatment and prepare for other tournaments."

No Davenport

REUTERS, Paris

American Lindsay Davenport has pulled out of the French Open because of an injury to her right knee. Davenport was seeded three for the event, which starts on Monday. It will be the first grand slam she has missed since Wimbledon in 1992.

Arantxa victor at home

AFP, Madrid

Number two seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain won the 170,000-dollar WTA tournament here Saturday, beating compatriot Angeles Montolio 7-5, 6-0.

Sanchez-Vicario, who this season has already won the Porto WTA tournament, collects her 29th career win and her sixth on Madrid soil.

However the 29-year-old Spaniard failed to impress in the early stages, with number eight seed Montolio racing to a 3-1 lead and threatening to increase the margin.

The 25-year-old Montolio has already impressed this year winning the Bol and Estoril tournaments, but by the time Sanchez-Vicario had pulled it back to 5-5 and some of the long-ball rallies had ended, Montolio's early promise lost some its bounce.

Sanchez-Vicario then raised the stakes in the second set, racing through to take the game in a 6-0 whitewash.

She is now seeded 11 for the French Open at Roland Garros which begins on Monday.

Atherton watch out

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Glenn McGrath says he will target England opener Mike Atherton during Australia's bid to win a seventh straight Ashes cricket series.

McGrath is convinced that by demoralising Atherton he will hurt the entire England side, just as he did to the West Indies earlier in the year when he mastered Brian Lara.

Atherton, a former England captain, is a veteran of 109 Tests (7,451 runs at 38.60), and his ability to see off the new ball attack of McGrath, Brett Lee and Jason Gillespie will be crucial.

"Atherton is still the key wicket, that's the one I'm after," McGrath said Saturday before flying off to England.

"It would be nice to continue to get him out -- I've got him 13 times so far and I'm looking forward to renewing our rivalry."

McGrath is the ideal bowler for English conditions, firing the ball on a good length with sharp pace and bounce then letting the pitch or a rash stroke from the batsman do the rest.

"Yeah, I've got some good memories in England -- the Ashes in 1997 and the World Cup in 1999, and last year playing for Worcestershire," he said.

McGrath was superb during Australia's World Cup victory while his 76 wickets for Worcestershire last county season came at only 13.77.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Australian Prime Minister John Howard (R) poses with Australian cricket captain Steve Waugh while holding the Ashes urn on the eve of the team's departure for England on Friday.

Pakistan not pleased

Cricket

REUTERS, Leicester

Pakistan captain Waqar Younis is unhappy that English county sides have fielded weakened teams against them in warm-up games for their test series against England.

"It's highly disappointing but we have to go with the flow," Waqar said on Sunday.

"We are short of practice just because of sub-standard opposition."

Pakistan lost the first test at Lord's by an innings and nine runs inside three days.

They bounced back from this defeat by beating below-strength Leicestershire within two days by an innings and 26 runs in their final preparation for the second test which starts at Old Trafford on Thursday.

"Nobody got to bowl or bat properly," he said.

But the match only served to

highlight the vast gulf in class between playing tests and English county opposition, of their previous warm-up matches -- against British Universities, Derbyshire and Kent -- have fully tested Pakistan, with the counties choosing to rest key players for what they regard as more important domestic competition matches.

The universities match ended in two days while Pakistan batted just once against Kent and faced only 20 overs of their second innings against Derbyshire before being thrashed in the first test.

Waqar said Leicestershire, without such leading players as Devon Malcolm, the injured Attaf Habib and overseas signing Daniel Marsh, had been among the top three in the county championship in recent years but had fielded a much-weakened side.

"I talked to the Leicestershire players, they've played a lot of cricket and have a lot of injuries. It's unfortunate. I feel for them. The amount they play is ridiculous."

Pybus was also pleased with the fast bowling of Waqar Younis, Waqar Akram, and Shoaib Akhtar against Leicestershire while Faisal Iqbal and Younus Youhanna were in the runs.

The Pakistan squad trained in Leicester on Sunday, before setting off for Manchester on Monday.

Little play was possible in the day's other First Division match between Glamorgan and Kent at Swansea but there was time for the Welsh county to reach 177 for eight after starting the day 42 for four in response to the visitors 252.

In the Second Division an unbeaten 83 from Hampshire wicket-keeper Adrian Aymes helped Robin Smith's side pile up 464 against Derbyshire. At the close of the hosts were 188 for four, 127 short of avoiding the follow-on, with Steve Stubbs 84 not out.

At Bristol, Worcestershire captain Graeme Hick did not enforce the follow-on after his team bowled out Gloucestershire for 175 after the visitors had made 326. Veteran seamer Stuart Lambeth took five for 22 and Worcestershire closed on 21 for two in their second innings.

Former England Under-19 captain Owais Shah made 58 and Paul Weekes chipped in with 50 as Middlesex reached 273 for six at Lord's.

day, bowled by left-arm Mark Illott for four. It was Stewart's first century of the season but he fell soon afterwards, bowled for 106 by Ricky Anderson.

In all the former England captain faced 198 balls and struck 13 fours.

Tudor, who two years ago was famously left stranded on 99 not out at the end of the Edgbaston Test against New Zealand, could not go from 96 to 100 in one hit.

But having reached the landmark with a steeet to third man he reeled off three fine boundaries, before he holed out to Law off a short ball.

The fast bowler faced 171 balls and hit one six and 16 fours in a classless innings.

Yorkshire's Chris Silverwood, one of several England quicks on the county's books, gave the selectors a reminder with five for 58 as Northamptonshire were bowled out for 195 at Headington in reply to the hosts 374. Following-on, Northamptonshire were 9-0 at the close.

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