

Socceroos relishing the prospect

Football

AFP, Melbourne

Australia will be aiming to complete a unique double when they take on World Cup holders and European champions France in a friendly international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday evening.

The Australians, who are using the match to prepare for a series of crucial World Cup play-off games later in the month, beat an under-strength French side 1-0 in the Confederations Cup in June this year.

No team has beaten the French twice since they became world champions on home soil in 1998.

Coach Roger Lemerre is treating the Australians with respect this time around, having named a full-strength squad apart from Bayern Munich duo Bixente Lizarazu and Willy Sagnol, who have club commitments, and the injured Youri Djorkaeff.

Late injuries to striker Thierry Henry and midfielder Emmanuel Petit - replaced by Nicolas Anelka and Alain Boghossian - have slightly depleted France but Lemerre still has an immensely powerful 20-man squad from which to name his starting side.

"We do not underestimate Australia's game at all," Lemerre told local reporters. "Australia has a very competitive team with a lot of quality."

Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez has dismissed the match as "ridiculous" because of the travel involved, but Lemerre knows his team needs match practice after having automatically qualified for next year's World Cup in South Korea and Japan as defending champions.

"We have come here to win," Lemerre said. "We are taking this match very seriously indeed."

But he laughed at talk of revenge for the Confederations Cup loss, saying: "This is a different match with different players."

Midfielder Zinedine Zidane, arguably the best player in the world, agreed.

"Australia are trying to make a name for themselves," he said. "Good



Australian football coach Frank Farina (L) and French coach Roger Lemerre shake hands before a press conference in Melbourne yesterday.

for them, but for France it is just another game."

The tyranny of distance means Australian coach Frank Farina is rarely able to get his full squad together. The vast majority of the Socceroos play in Europe - and their clubs are often reluctant to release them.

The Australians will face the fifth team from the South American qualifying group - either Uruguay, Brazil or Colombia - for a place in the World Cup for the second time.

Farina sees the French game as being a crucial warm-up for those matches, bringing together players like Leeds United duo Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell, Feyenoord star Brett Emerton and Middlesbrough players Mark Schwarzer and Paul Okon.

Kewell has played only 100 minutes for the national team over the past two years.

"It is difficult to get quickly," said Viduka. "One of the bad things about playing for Australia is that you don't get that many times to play together."

"We are going to have to do our best and get some sort of organisation

going. "We've been second-class citizens for a while, but by winning this game and qualifying for the World Cup we can gain some respect."

Australia have also been hit by injuries with Blackburn defender Lucas Neill and his replacement, West Ham's Hayden Foxe, both pulling out. Norwegian-based Clayton Zane, who scored the winner against France in the Confederations Cup, was given a late call-up.

Australia's build-up has also been damaged by an on-going row between the players and the federation, Soccer Australia, over payments and bonus deals.

A strike threat appears to have been averted but the Australian players are reported by the local media to be furious with the officials.

"For three years we've been playing for minimal amounts because we sympathise with Soccer Australia's financial predicament," said striker John Aloisi, who plays for Spanish side Osasuna. "We are only asking for a

small amount in the overall scheme of things."

Australia are a team in form with seven wins from their last 10 matches, although an under-strength squad lost 3-0 to Japan in their last outing in Shizuoka in August.

France's last trip abroad resulted in a 2-1 loss to Chile, a side that has failed to qualify for the next World Cup. Lemerre will be anxious to avoid a repeat.

Early on Saturday, over 70,000 tickets had been sold, Soccer Australia said.

LIKELY TEAMS

Australia: Mark Schwarzer; Kevin Muscat, Craig Moore, Shaun Murphy, Tony Vidmar; Brett Emerton, Paul Okon (capt), Josip Skoko, Harry Kewell; Mark Viduka, Paul Agostino

France: Fabien Barthez; Lilian Thuram, Marcel Desailly (capt), Frank Leboeuf, Vincent Candela; Robert Pires, Patrick Vieira, Zinedine Zidane (capt), Claude Makelele, Christophe Dugarry; David Trezeguet.

India's tour tie Opening day rained off

REUTERS, East London

The first day of the four day tour match between South Africa A and India in East London on Saturday was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to overnight rain.

Meanwhile reports from New Delhi say, uncapped Ajay Ratra has been named as standby wicketkeeper following the withdrawal of Sameer Dighe from India's tour of South Africa.

"We have got Ratra in mind. We are keeping him as standby," India's chief of selectors Chandu Borde said from the western city of Pune on Saturday.

Dighe, the first-choice wicketkeeper for the three-Test series, suffered back spasms on the morning of the first Test in Bloemfontein last Saturday.

He was replaced by debutant Deep Dasgupta as India lost the match by nine wickets.

Dighe will return home without having played a game after doctors told him he might not recover for the remainder of the series.

Ratra played a key role in India's under-19 World Cup triumph in Sri Lanka early last year.

"We will send him only if the team management asks, in case of an emergency," Borde added.

The second Test in Port Elizabeth starts on November 16 while the final Test begins in Centurion on November 23.

Gayle's century in drawn match

AFP, Matara

West Indian opener Chris Gayle slammed a superb 120 against Sri Lanka A on a rain-curtailed third and final day of a warm-up game, which ended in a draw here on Saturday.

The West Indies, resuming at 134 for no loss, reached 241-2 in their first innings in reply to their opponents' 269.

Just 35 overs were possible due to rain on the last day of the tourists' practice match before the first Test against Sri Lanka, starting at Galle on Tuesday.

Gayle, 96 overnight, made the most of the opportunity as he completed his 10th first-class century in the day's fifth over with a boundary off leg-spinner Kaushal Lokuarachchi.

The 22-year-old left-hander dominated the home team's attack with a wide range of strokes, hitting 20 fours in his 119-ball knock before retiring.

He put on 173 for the opening wicket with Daren Ganga, who scored 54 off 197 balls with six fours to provide valuable support.

Ramareesh Sarwan also gained batting practice ahead of the first Test, scoring an unbeaten 39.

Rain had also hit the tourists' first game at Colombo last week, washing out play on the last two days.

BRIEF SCORES SRI LANKA: 269 (H Tillakaratne 86, I Daniel 62; D Ramnarine 4-54, C Hooper 2-32) WEST INDIES: 241-2 (C Gayle 120 retired, D Ganga 54, R Sarwan 39 not out)

SERIES SNIPPNETS

FROM PAGE 13 It was later learnt that the right-hander had made a good bargain with the tourists during the lunch interval. It was not new for country's lone one-day centurion. He had earlier conducted the same business transaction during Bangladesh's tour of Zimbabwe in April.

TIMELY START At last play began exactly at 9.45 in the morning after two consecutive days.

On the opening day on Thursday the match began after one-and-a-half-hour delay because of a soggy pitch. And the next day play started 15 minutes before schedule. That was done to make up for lost time the earlier day.

However, the day's proceedings yesterday got off to a belligerent start as Heath Streak drove Monjurul's third ball through the covers for four.

The flow of boundaries continued in the second over as well when Travis Friend struck two consecutive fours off Kowshik.

ATHARAGAIN Athar Ali, the ex-Bangladesh opening batsman paid another visit to the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Saturday.

Asked whether Al Shahriar deserved to be playing at the top of the innings, Athar replied: "Let him have another chance in the second Test."

"He has opened an innings only for the second time today. So, I think it is too early to make yet another change at the top."

However, he felt that Mohammed Ashraf was best suited at number six.

"If I was a selector I would not have promoted him as an opener, rather he needs to be left in the middle-order perhaps at number six in the order," opined the stylish right-hander.

Rain after Gilchrist ton

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

Steve Waugh gave Adam Gilchrist his head to reach his fourth Test century before declaring Australia's first innings and setting after victory against New Zealand in the first cricket Test here Saturday.

Gilchrist was on 98 at lunch amid expectations of an imminent declaration but he reappeared after the adjournment and plundered a further 20 runs before he was caught by substitute fieldsman Lou Vincent off Chris Cairns for 118.

Gilchrist and Jason Gillespie (20 not out) came immediately from the field as skipper Waugh declared at 486 for nine.

The Australians had 6.4 overs to bowl at the Kiwi openers, Mark Richardson (10) and Matthew Bell (6), before rain yet again sent the players from the field at 1.48pm local. Play was officially abandoned by the umpires at 4.14pm (06:14 GMT).

The New Zealanders were 29 without loss with the only anxious moment in their 35 minutes at the crease coming when Richardson on one should have been run out only for Brett Lee's wild throw from point to fly over the head of Justin Langer, who was standing over the stumps.

Weather interruptions have carved huge chunks of play out of the first Test. Only 18.4 overs were possible in the 86 minutes of play Saturday following 29 overs on Friday's second day.

Despite the time lost match officials bizarrely still insisted on scheduling the routine lunch break after just 30 minutes of play Saturday.

The Kiwis' first objective, if allowed by the weather, is to pass the 286 follow-on target to prevent Australia's push for victory with just two days left to play.

Rain looks set to be Australia's obstacle to their quest to extend an unbeaten record of 12 successive Tests at home and two years without a draw.

Australia, who have won 20 and lost three of the last 23 Tests, last had a

draw against Sri Lanka in Colombo in September 1999.

Gilchrist, who came to the crease with Australia wobbling at 260 for five on Thursday after being 224 without loss, shared in his seventh century stand, this time 135 with Brett Lee for the eighth wicket to take the Test out of New Zealand's reach.

Gilchrist, the most lethal No.7 batsman in world cricket, smashed his

Australian umpire Daryl Harper, who admitted he erred in turning down an lbw appeal on centurion Justin Langer in the opening over of the Test Thursday by plays, gave Lee out when television replays suggested the ball missed the No.9's bat and glove. Lee was one run short of his highest Test score of 62 not out scored in last year's corresponding Gabba Test against the West Indies.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard after the third day of the first cricket Test between Australia and New Zealand at the Gabba on Saturday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings (overnight 435-7)

Table with columns: Player, Runs, Wickets. Includes Langer c Vettori b McMillan 104, Hayden c Richardson b Cairns 136, Ponting c Vettori b Cairns 5, M Waugh lbw b Astle 0, S Waugh c Parore b McMillan 3, Martyn c Vettori b McMillan 4, Gilchrist c (sub) Vincent b Cairns 118, Warne c Sinclair b Cairns 22, Lee c Parore b Cairns 61, Gillespie not out 20, Extras: (lb-4, w-1, nb-8) 13, Total: (For 9 wickets declared, 131 overs) 486

Fall of wickets: 1-224, 2-233, 3-235, 4-256, 5-260, 6-263, 7-302, 8-437, 9-486

Table with columns: Player, O, M, R, W. Includes Cairns 37 8 146 5, Nash 30 6 93 0, O'Connor 17.2 4 67 0, Vettori 13.4 0 65 0, Astle 19 7 46 1, McMillan 14 1 65 3

NEW ZEALAND: First innings

Table with columns: Player, O, M, R, W. Includes Richardson not out 10, Bell not out 6, Extras: (lb-5, nb-8) 13, Total: (For no wicket, 6.4 overs) 29

To bat: Matthew Sinclair, Stephen Fleming, Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Chris Cairns, Adam Parore, Dion Nash, Daniel Vettori, Shayne O'Connor.

Table with columns: Player, O, M, R, W. Includes McGrath 3.4 1 19 0, Gillespie 3 2 5 0, Umpires: Steve Bucknor (WI), Daryl Harper (Aus).



ADAM GILCHRIST...118

118 off 158 balls with 17 fours and six.

He now averages 53.77 in his 23rd Test since his debut here against Pakistan two years ago.

When he was caught in the deep, Gilchrist became Cairns' fifth wicket of the innings. It was the 11th time in Tests Cairns has taken five wickets in an innings.

Australia's hopes of an early breakthrough before the onset of rain were dashed by paceman Glenn McGrath's struggle to find his rhythm, often being no-balled for over-stepping.

The third day's play got underway 30 minutes before the scheduled lunch interval after attempts to make up for lost time over Friday's interruptions were thwarted by rain.

Brett Lee added one to his overnight score of 60 before he appeared unfortunate to be given out caught behind by Adam Parore off Cairns in the day's second over.

Players give thumbs-up to strike action

AFP, London

Members of the English Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action on Friday.

Ninety-nine percent of players in England backed a strike in response to the refusal of football authorities to guarantee them five percent of the income received from television deals.

But PFA chief executive Gordon Taylor said he was hopeful of avoiding industrial action if the football authorities backed down.

"We have one month to decide when to give notice of action or commence action," Taylor told a press conference in Manchester.

"We could do a deal today if they respond to our request. We don't feel we are being difficult. We feel we are being fair."

"We feel very firm in our belief. The PFA has its members and we negotiate for its members," he added.

The PFA argue that five percent is the figure they have received in broadcasting fees since the 1950s. That income is required to help

'Bring back Romario'



AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The furore caused by Brazil's defeat to Bolivia has led to widespread calls for the immediate return of 1994 World Cup star Romario to the national team ahead of their final group qualifier next week.

"In decisive moments the little one (Romario) used to pop up and save the country's skin," said one headline here Friday as the only country to have qualified for every World Cup mullered over its potential absence from the 2002 showpiece.

Brazil's hopes of qualifying for the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea hit a new low after the former triple world champions went down 3-1 in La Paz on Wednesday.

Although Brazil sit fourth in their qualifying group, fears of dropping to fifth place - which would force Brazil into an unprecedented two-legged qualifying play-off, against Australia - have led many to call for veteran Romario to be included in coach Luis

Felipe Scolari's plans. Romario, 35, has been out of the team for some time but is currently the top goalscorer in the Brazilian league - which has not gone unnoticed in the country which is finding it hard to revive the goalscoring form of the golden years.



ROMARIO

Going in the veteran's favour is the memory of his performance during the 1994 World Cup qualifiers when he was called up to bolster a struggling Brazil side.

'We have to play as if this were the World Cup final'



INTERNET, Rio de Janeiro

After having to swallow the bitter pill of the 3-1 defeat at the hands of a mediocre Bolivia, a result that has postponed the all-important qualification for the 2002 World Cup finals next year, the Brazilian national team returns to work this Friday with the single aim of beating Venezuela next Wednesday in Sao Luis in the last World Cup qualifier.

The players and Technical Commission are already at Granja Comari in Teresopolis, where training began on Friday afternoon.

And if the pressure for an obligatory victory next Wednesday were not enough, a new factor has had to be taken into account in the run up to the deciding game: the almost illogical ascension of the Venezuelan team. The team more known for its role as a work out bag in South American games, has inexplicably and surprisingly found a streak of good form in the last few rounds of the World Cup qualifiers.

After beating Uruguay, Chile and Peru, Venezuela went one better and defeated the excellent Paraguay 3-1 in their last game.

Although downhearted after the loss to Bolivia, the Brazilian team knows that it will have to work hard to beat Venezuela. The spirit is all for one and one for all in this last dramatic

conclusion to a mixed campaign so far in the qualifying rounds. If Juninho Paulista said that the team is united, Ronaldinho Gaúcho went one step further: "We have to play as if this were the World Cup final."

In the midst of the melancholy



RONALDINHO GAÚCHO

surrounding the deflated Brazilian team after the loss in La Paz, at least two items of good news have helped to lift the players' spirits.

"I've improved my game a lot since '98 (when she was ranked in the top 10) but sometimes I don't bring it on the court. I have problems playing as well as I do in practice," said Schnyder, who enjoyed considerable support from the large number of Swiss and German spectators.

Schnyder dethrones Kremer

AFP, Pattaya

Patty Schnyder overcame defending champion Anne Kremer of Luxembourg on Friday to line up a place in the semifinals of the WTA tournament in Pattaya against Rossana delos Rios.

Seventh-seeded Schnyder won 6-3, 6-4, while Paraguay's number eight seed de los Rios ended the run of gallant qualifier Hsieh Su-Wei with a 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory.

The other semi-final will pit second seed Henrieta Nagyova of Slovakia against Tatiana Poutchek of Belarus. Nagyova defeated South African qualifier Leizel Huber 6-4, 6-3, and Poutchek upset fifth seeded Russian and 2000 runner-up Tatiana Panova 6-2, 6-3.

Switzerland's Schnyder, who was once ranked eight in the world but is now struggling to stay in the top 50, managed to show a few flashes of her old form as she dismissed an erratic Kremer. The defending champion's serve was unreliable and she overhit too many of her groundstrokes to seriously trouble Schnyder.

"I've improved my game a lot since '98 (when she was ranked in the top 10) but sometimes I don't bring it on the court. I have problems playing as well as I do in practice," said Schnyder, who enjoyed considerable support from the large number of Swiss and German spectators.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes clues like 'Stationer's quantity', 'Streetcar', 'Make Desire', etc.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters B P N S L N V S L B R O M V G L L O R B M S J S P N N V B L S B N V S N W Q M K C S W C J Q S L S U O K - Z G K N S U.

CRYPTOQUIP B P N S L N V S L B R O M V G L L O R B M S J S P N N V B L S B N V S N W Q M K C S W C J Q S L S U O K - Z G K N S U. Yesterday's Cryptquip: NOTE FOUND ON THE NUDIST COLONY'S OFFICE DOOR: "SORR WE'RE CLOTHED FOR WINTER". Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals R