

Swann signs for Lancs

English county Lancashire signed Northamptonshire batsman Alec Swann on Tuesday to fill the gap left by the retirement of their former England captain Michael Atherton.

The 25-year-old brother of England off-spinner Graeme Swann has left Wantage Road after six years.

He said: "Lancashire are one of the big clubs with lots of fine players and I'm delighted that they have offered me this opportunity."

Lancashire cricket manager Mike Watkinson said: "The retirement of Michael Atherton has left us a little light on opening batsmen.

"Our better junior batters are a couple of years off being ready for first XI cricket and Alec will hopefully bridge that gap.

"It will be an excellent opportunity for Alec, who had a useful record with Northants and we believe he will increase the competition for batting places at Old Trafford."

Last season Swann scored 479 first-class runs at an average of 21.77.

ICC Knockout

FROM PAGE 13

It was first held in 1998 in Dhaka and then in Kenya in 2000 to raise funds for the ICC's development programme.

Rahman fiddles

FROM PAGE 13

interest above everything else, he observed.

The first casualty of the sanction would be the scrapping of the SAFF Championship scheduled for January 26. Besides, Bangladesh would lose the right to collect one-million dollars from the lucrative 'Go for Goal' project.

SERIES CHIPS

FROM PAGE 13

Hira had one expression to sum up the Bangladesh innings... horrible.

"Watching this is absolutely torture. The batsmen were always struggling on the crease. I think that they are not learning anything," said a depressed Hira, now working as an assistant development officer in Bangladesh Cricket Board.

The former Bangladesh captain, who was appointed team manager on the eve of the Test, was giving his reaction while watching the Pakistan innings in the afternoon.

It was learnt that the Board appointed Hira after none of the directors were willing to accept the post. By convention, a Board director is usually appointed as manager of the national team.

HAMPSHIRE NO STRANGER

Umpire John Hampshire is on his fourth visit to Bangladesh.

"It's a very good country and I like coming here again and again," said the Hampshire man after officiating the first day of his 21st Test in uniform.

"I feel good to be in cricket in any form. It's my passion," added the former Yorkshire player, who retired from international cricket in 1975.

The 61-year-old former England batsman, who is officiating in the first Test along with Akhteruddin of Bangladesh, first came to Bangladesh in 1981 as a player of MCC. He then came to Bangladesh in 1993-94 season as coach of Zimbabwe team before accompanying MCC again as an umpire couple of years back.

WASIM BUSY AS USUAL

It is no wonder why Pakistan fast bowler Wasim Akram consider Bangladesh as his second home. He has many friends other than fans here. Wasim never forgets to do the socialising whenever he comes in Dhaka.

The all-rounder attended the gaye halud of BCB president Ali Asghar's would-be daughter-in-law on Tuesday. The whole Pakistan team is expected to attend the marriage ceremony of his son.

Sourav wants to forget '01



REUTERS, New Delhi

Chief selector Chandu Borde said it was too early to comment whether Ganguly faced the sack, but he has been asked to play in a domestic one-day tournament starting on Thursday along with struggling team mate Vangipurapu Laxman.

India skipper Sourav Ganguly, under pressure to retain his post because of his poor Test batting form, is hoping the new year will bring him runs and his side an elusive overseas Test series win.

"It was a disappointing year of Test cricket for me," Ganguly told this news agency by phone from Calcutta on Wednesday.

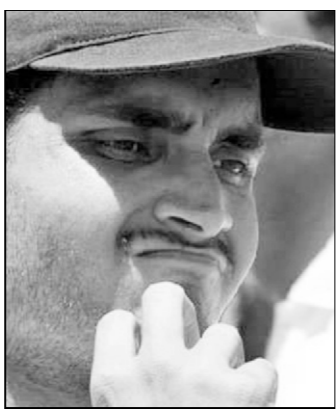
But the 29-year-old denied he faced a technique problem in Tests. "It is just a bad phase. It is only a matter of time.

"Both in one-dayers and Tests I have got starts. I have converted them in the one-day game but not in Tests," he said.

Ganguly has not scored a Test hundred in two years and has managed only three fifties in 27 innings since taking over as captain late in 2000.

But in contrast, he has maintained his one-day form, scoring two hundreds and six fifties from 22 innings last year.

He managed only 68 runs in four innings during last month's three-Test home series against England, won 1-0 by India, to leave the national selectors concerned.



SOURAV GANGULY

Ganguly said the pressures of captaincy had nothing to do with his poor Test scores.

"Not really. I realise captaincy is a high-profile job. The expectations are immense in India. One should be able to do it."

Known for his sweetly-time shots through the off-side, the left-hander

enders were kept fresh from Kumble. He duly feasted on them.

Perhaps, therefore, off-spinner Laker's 10 for 53 off an extraordinary 51.2 overs against Australia at Old Trafford to complete a match haul of 19 for 90 stands out as extra special.

For though he may have been helped by a drying wicket Laker certainly got no assistance whatsoever from slow left-arm Tony Lock.

Lock, Laker's Surrey team mate and with whom he did not always see eye-to-eye, got angrier and angrier as he beat the bat repeatedly while Laker did the nicking at the other end.

Had anybody suggested to the combustible Lock, who dismissed just one batsman all game for match figures of one for 106, that he should bowl badly to help Laker he would probably have throttled them.

When all is said and done, however, Muralitharan -- who only a few seasons ago looked set to be thrown out of the game because of an unorthodox action -- looks certain to go down in history as the most successful spin bowler of all time.

And even curmudgeons can recognise a good sport when they see one.

His teammates may understandably have offered him a helping hand last week but Muralitharan was clearly not asking for it.

He finished the first innings bowling with an injured finger, dislocated as he bravely attempted to scoop up a catch at deep square leg offered by Olunga off Tiaan Samaraweera's bowling.

Had he taken it, the perfect 10 would not have been an issue.

Sorry, Murali!



REUTERS, London

It would take the grumpiest of curmudgeons to glean satisfaction from Muttiah Muralitharan's missing out on an historic 10-wicket innings haul against Zimbabwe.

So I admit it. I am grumpy. And curmudgeonly to boot.

The Sri Lankan off-spinner, with nine for 51 in the first innings of the second Test last week, was on course to become the third bowler in Test history to take all 10 wickets last week when teammate Chaminda Vaas deprived him of the honour.

Irony of ironies, left-arm pace bowler Vaas did so accidentally.

Bowling at tail-ender Henry Olonga, he resumed the second day bowling slow medium, way outside off stump, in an attempt to gift Muralitharan the final batsman.

Olonga spoilt the party with a rabbit's swish, contriving to get himself caught behind.

Wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara, to his credit, felt obliged to complete the catch with regret.

Sri Lanka, indeed, had been doing what they could to nudge Muralitharan into the history books on the previous evening, with some distinctly friendly bowling from the other end as the off-spinner neared the 10-wicket mark.

Would Muralitharan, as fine a fellow as a player, really have relished the ultimate bowling accolade if it had been thus contrived?

Probably not. How would Don Bradman have felt if England had

gifted him a slow leg-side full toss in his last innings at The Oval in 1948 to get the four runs he needed to average 100 in Test cricket? Probably not quite right.

Muralitharan almost admitted as much when asked about Vaas's intervention.



MUTTIAH MURALITHARAN

"I know he didn't want to take it when he did, but the game and the team is always bigger than us," he said.

Only two bowlers have ever recorded 10 wickets in a Test innings -- England's Jim Laker in 1956 and India's Anil Kumble in 1999.

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble's 10 for 74 against Pakistan in Delhi, however, was completed in equally suspect circumstances.

As he headed towards his historic feat after a fine exhibition of attacking spin bowling, skipper Mohammad Azharuddin appeared to exhort the other bowlers to bowl wider and wider to ensure the tail-

Pollock stands by Ford



INTERNET, Adelaide

South African cricket captain Shaun Pollock on Monday came out in support of embattled national coach Graham Ford.

Ford's position has become the subject of much debate after Percy Sonn, the president of the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCB), indicated that the board might re-evaluate Ford's performance following the team's dismal performance against Australia.

He notably said there should be



SHAUN POLLOCK

an inquiry if a coach failed to ensure that his players met certain standards. This followed South Africa losing a Test series in a 3-0 white-wash for the first time in seven Test series since 1931-32. Before the tour it was hoped that South Africa could win a series in Australia for the first time.

Pollock said Ford's record spoke for itself. He pointed out that Ford helped South Africa to win the series against India in India as well as against the West Indies in the Caribbean. Concerning the latter outing he pointed out that it was the first time that a South African team beat the home team conclusively in both the Tests and one-day matches.

"The fact that South Africa beat India in India does tell you something about the coach, doesn't it? He must have done something right since that feat was only achieved twice in the past 20 years," Pollock said.

"The South African team seemed mediocre compared to Australia, and now it depends of how the team will turn the tables when they play at home. It is important how they will deal with the defeat."

He said Ford's record (seven series wins and one shared series against Sri Lanka) was excellent. He was good at managing manpower, and the players had confidence in him, Pollock added.

Under Ford's stewardship South Africa whitewashed India 2-0 two years ago, the first time any team managed this since 1987.

The stars of the series were Mark Boucher and Jacques Kallis in the first Test in Mumbai, while the bowling of Nicky Boje, Shaun Pollock and Allan Donald, coupled with excellent batting by Lance Klusener and Gary Kirsten, saw South Africa home in the second Test in Bangalore.

South Africa also took a 2-1 series victory over the West Indies in the Caribbean last year. Herschelle Gibbs, Daryll Cullinan and Pollock shone with the bat, while Kallis and Pollock again did wonders with the ball. Boje also took some crucial wickets.

Ironically, Australia lost their away series against India last year and could only manage a shared series in the Caribbean two years ago.

Contrasting start for Capriati

AFP, Sydney

Jennifer Capriati enjoyed the best year of her life in 2001. But 2002 has not started so well for the American tennis star.

Capriati was named Sportswoman of the Year in a number of international polls after turning her life and career around and winning the Australian and French Open titles and making the semifinals at Wimbledon and the US Open.

Preparing to defend a Grand Slam title for the first time at next week's Australian Open -- for which she is the top seed in the absence of the injured Lindsay Davenport -- the 25-year-old American is troubled both by injury and a lack of match practice.

Capriati, the top seed in the women's event at this week's Sydney International, was beaten 7-6, 3-6, 6-4 in the second round by qualifier Alexandra Stevenson on Wednesday.

She also suffered an injury to her right hip, which needed treatment in the third set and which she plans to rest for 24 hours ahead of the start of the first Grand Slam of the year on Monday.

After playing in an exhibition in Hong Kong last week -- where she suffered an injury to her left hip -- Capriati had been counting on playing some matches in Sydney, but lost to Stevenson after having a first-round bye.

Capriati said she was trying not to let the pressure of defending a Grand Slam title for the first time affect her.



Participants of the Partex 17th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship are seen with the Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt Gen M Harun-Ar-Rashid (6th from L) and vice-chairman of Partex Group Aziz Al Kaiser (6th from R) at the club before the tee-off yesterday.

Milon leads BAGC field



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Milon finished top of the leaderboard at the end of the first day of the Partex 17th Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Wednesday.

The promising Bangladesh golfer carded a gross score of 72 after enjoying the best round of the day at the picturesque 18-hole course.

He had birdies on the 4th, 7th, 12th and 13th holes respectively. But dropped two shots at the 11th hole and a shot each at the first and ninth holes.

Two shots behind in joint second are Sri Lanka's Lalith Kumara and

Vaqa Ahmed of Pakistan.

Four players occupy third place. Among them include current champion M Siddikur Rahman of Bangladesh, former winner Anura Rohana of Sri Lanka and Sanjeev Mehra of the prestigious Royal Calcutta Golf Club (RCGC).

They are all three shots adrift on a gross score of 75.

Besides, fifteen players are within seven shots of the leader after the opening round.

The exciting day's golf on the lush green carpet also featured a number of good performances. Germany's Ferenc Georgi, a member of the KGC, and playing with a handicap of 18, had the best net of 65.

Yakib Jumat of Brunei (69) and Rahul Halwasiya of the RCGC with a net score of 70 closely followed

him.

Earlier, president of the club and Chief of Army Staff Harun-Ar-Rashid teed-off the 129 participants at 7.30 in the morning. Aziz-al-Kaiser Tito, vice-chairman of sponsors Partex Group, was among the dignitaries present.

The four-day premier amateur event in the country continues today. Finance Minister Saifur Rahman is expected to give away prizes on Saturday.

Following is the first day's gross scores:

72-Mohammad Milon; 74-Vaqa Ahmed, Lalith Kumar; 75- Jaideep Patwardhan, M Siddikur Rahman, Sanjeev Mehra, Anura Rohana; 76-Gurbaz Mann, Rahul Halwasiya; Sadiq Quddus and Shahid Javed Khan.

Banned for life, period



AFP, Johannesburg

The United Cricket Board (UCB) of South Africa Tuesday reiterated its position that disgraced former captain Hansie Cronje has been banned for life and will stay that way, following a board meeting here.

This followed remarks by UCB president Percy Sonn while on tour in Australia with South Africa's national team last week that Cronje should be given a role within the sport -- seen as signalling a possible return to the game by Cronje.

Cronje was banned for life by the UCB 18 months ago after admitting before a commission of inquiry that he accepted some 100,000 dollars from Indian bookmakers and offered other players money to underperform.

In a statement released on Tuesday afternoon, the UCB said that "contrary to interpretations in the media", Sonn was not called in after his comments to face the executive, nor was it a disciplinary meeting.

"Sonn certainly never proposed that the ban on Hansie Cronje be lifted," UCB spokeswoman Bronwyn Wilkinson told public radio



HANSIE CRONJE

public.

Sonn caused a furore in Australia when he rejected the side selected for the third Test and insisted that a black player, Justin Ontong, be chosen.

But according to UCB policy, Sonn was acting within his rights as a black player on the fringes of the side is to be given an opportunity once a Test series has been decided.

South Africa lost the Test and the series 3-0.

Sonn intimated that UCB coach Graham Ford should bear the brunt for the 3-0 Test drubbing and be replaced, but the UCB stated that it fully supported Ford, his assistant Corrie van Zyl and skipper Shaun Pollock.

The criticism levelled at the Sonn by a number of former players, including former star Clive Rice, was also dealt with at the meeting.

"The UCB values their expertise and experience and invites them to make a contribution to South African cricket in a positive manner."

"If there are issues -- particularly around transformation -- that these former players do not fully understand, the UCB would be happy to engage them in discussions," the board said.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "You betchah!"

4 Main points

8 Settled

12 Feedbag bit

13 Milky-white gem

14 Summit

15 Nova Scotia park site

17 Calendar

18 Not al fresco

19 A million millennia

21 Began

22 Doctor-to-be's study

26 Got inquisitive

29 Ball girl?

30 Exist

31 Some retrievers ...

32 ... and their coat

33 Let go

34 Spoon-bender

35 Candy that's dispensed

36 Search

DOWN

1 -- Bear

2 Have it coming

3 Sch.

4 Agreed silently

5 Increased

6 Prohibit

7 Woody Allen

8 "Home, Sweet Home"

9 Expert

10 "Believer"

11 Aachen article

16 Frasier's brother

20 Scepter topper

23 Former filly

24 Piccadilly statue

25 Cabinet div.

26 "Clue" professor

27 Exceptional

28 Footnote abbr.

29 Old-line detergent brand

32 Highlight

33 Because of

35 Omega predecessor

36 Bartlett's collection

38 Czarist edict

39 Lower-case

42 Pedestal occupant

43 Barn-roof attachment

44 Keeps tabs on

45 Beatrix's expletive

46 Way back when

47 Pine

49 Roman Helios

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12			13						14		
15		16							17		
18					19	20					
21								23	24	25	
26	27	28			29				30		
31				32				33			
34				35				36			
37								39			
40									42	43	44
45	46	47			48	49					
50									52		
53									54		
55									55		

CRYPTOQUIP

S C U W M C K V U R M A Z W
 L W K R R O O A L D A L G ' Z R G
 Z D W M W L Z V T M V G Z S W G T.

A Z L W M U W L G R N R M N R A L W

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A SCHOOL STUDENT GOT VERY UNSATISFACTORY GRADES, WOULD THEY BE BELOW C LEVEL?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals E

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.