

Dad's Army get backing

INTERNET, London

Chairman of selectors David Graveney has defended England's recall of veterans John Crawley, Dominic Cork and Alec Stewart for the first Test against Sri Lanka.

Newspapers described England's line-up as "Dad's Army" when it was announced last week-end, with 30-year-olds Crawley and Cork back.

And commentators were disappointed that 20-year-old batsman Ian Bell should have had a chance. Stewart, 39, returns after incumbent wicketkeeper James Foster broke his arm.

But Graveney told BBC Radio Five Live: "The suggestion that being 30 you're qualified for Dad's Army is a little extreme.

"The media have built up a number of young players, Ian Bell in particular, and as a result of that, if they get their predictions wrong then it's our fault."

Bell was called into England's touring squad in New Zealand in April, but has not enjoyed a good start to the domestic season with Warwickshire.

"Bell was an option and it wasn't until half an hour before the team was announced that we made a decision," Graveney admitted.

On the eve of the Test, captain Nasser Hussain stressed players must "earn the right" to play for their country if England are to end a run of four series without victory.

"We're not such a great, superior England side that we can start throwing people in and giving them Test matches and saying it's a great time to play because it's not," he said.

"There are no easy Test matches, we haven't won a series for four series and Sri Lanka are a top outfit and we have to pick our best side, which I firmly believe we have done.

"Everyone keeps presuming we're this great side that goes around beating everyone all the time, but we're England.

"As we saw in New Zealand, we have to pick our best side to play at our best all the time to win Test series."

Hussain said England had picked players on form for the first Test of the season.

"We've picked the leading run-scorer in county cricket (Crawley) and the leading wicket-taker (Cork)."

"You earn the right to come into this dressing room and play for England, it's as simple as that."

West couldn't care less

INTERNET, London

Nigeria's defender Taribo West today insisted his team are not frightened of England and David Beckham, the Evening Standard reported.

West admitted the Super Eagles' preparations were well behind those of 'Group of Death' opponents Sweden, Argentina and England.

West, who is in Dublin as Nigeria play a friendly against Republic of Ireland tonight, said: "We are not the best team in Africa, Cameroon are. They are the leaders of African football, the team we must all emulate.

"If we are to succeed in Japan next month we must be like Cameroon. We must believe that we can beat England, Sweden and Argentina. It will not be easy but I am not afraid of any team or any opponent we will face in Japan. You ask me of Freddie Ljungberg and Beckham but I tell you that God did not make them with three legs and four arms.

"They are human, the same as the rest of us and the same as me. It will not take a superhuman effort to play against them. I'm not afraid of them."

Morocco waits merrily

Cricket

REUTERS/AFP, Rabat

Sri Lanka have confirmed they will take part in a tri-nation cricket tournament to be held for the first time in Morocco in August along with Pakistan and South Africa, organisers have said.

The tournament, with the northern city of Tangiers as venue, will set precedence in the Arab North African country where the sport is little known.

It will run from August 12 to 21 and have a total prize money of 250,000 USD with 120,000 USD for the winning team.

Chakib Nejjar, head of the Royal Cricket Federation (FRMC), voiced enthusiasm for the proposal. "Sri Lanka confirmed it would be taking

part, we are very proud," he told Reuters.

"I'm sure that the ICC (International Cricket Council) team, due to visit and inspect the Tangiers stadium in June, will find all facilities up to international standards," he added.

Morocco has also been proposed as a potential venue for Australia's series against Pakistan in September, due to security concerns following the suicide bombing in Karachi last week that killed 14 people.

Cricket was introduced in Morocco in 1991 and received a big boost after the construction in 1999 of a cricket stadium in Tangiers at a total cost of \$25 million.

"We have a lot to learn, since cricket is a new sport in Morocco, but we already play a championship and an eight-team national cup," said cricket player Amine Mejjati,

who heads the FRMC technical commission.

A 25-million dollar cricket facility has been constructed at Tangiers by the Cricketers Benefit Fund Series (CBFS), organisers of cricket internationals in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Sharjah, promoted by a cricket-loving businessman from the UAE, Abdulrehaman Bukhatir, has hosted more one-day internationals than any venue in the world since the first official match was played there in 1984.

Former Indian Test star Mohinder Amarnath, hired by the CBFS to teach cricket to youngsters in Morocco, said Tangiers "was a great place to hold international matches."

"There is already a lot of interest in the game among the locals, who play tournaments regularly," he said.

Henry made head selector

Cricket

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Omar Henry, South Africa's first black Test cricketer, will head the national team's new panel of selectors, the United Cricket Board (UCB) announced.

The UCB said it hoped the 50-year-old's appointment as convenor of the committee would help "take South African cricket forward" after the majority of the former panel were sacked following the team's capitulation to Australia last season.

Haroon Lorgat is the only member to retain his seat on the panel, which also includes Pat Symcox, Hugh Page and Douglas Maku.

Henry has resigned from his job as Boland coach to take up his new position.

"I believe my cricket thinking is in line with most people who have played international cricket and I look forward to serving the sport I love in this position," Henry was

quoted as saying in a UCB statement.

"I think the panel itself is a fantastic mixture -- there is a lot of great knowledge and I believe we can all



OMAR HENRY

complement each other in taking South African cricket forward to where we all want it to be."

Former off-spinner Symcox played 20 Tests. Page, Lorgat and

Maku played first class cricket during South Africa's 22-year isolation from the international arena in the apartheid era.

Lorgat was the only survivor from the previous committee, which featured Graeme Pollock, Mike Procter, Peter Babela, Morris Garda and convenor Rushdi Magiet.

Procter withdrew from the panel after being appointed an International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee.

The rest of the members were removed in the wake of South Africa losing five of six Test matches and eight of 11 one-day internationals against the Australians.

"I am proud to announce this panel and believe that in Omar we have someone who fits perfectly the profile that we would want for a convenor of national selectors," UCB chief executive Gerald Majola said in the statement.

Henry played three Tests as an orthodox left-arm spinner. In 123 first class matches, he took 434 wickets at 24.97 with a best analysis of seven for 22.

Steady Marvan, Mahela

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the century partnership between Atapattu and Jayawardene from 163 balls.

But when he was on 57 Jayawardene called for a runner.

He still went for his shots, but one magnificent cover-drive off Caddick for four was followed by the sight of Jayawardene doubled up in pain.

Meanwhile, Atapattu, who made five ducks in his first six Test innings but has since converted five of his nine Test centuries into double hundreds, continued serenely.

England, reduced to the occasional optimistic lbw appeal, brought on part-time medium-pace Mark Butcher in the hope of buying a wicket.

Their frontline bowlers had been on the backfoot soon after Jayasuriya had won the toss.

Indeed it was the batsmen themselves who played a major role in the loss of Sri Lanka's first wicket with the score on 38.

Atapattu cut Matthew Hoggard to deep point but Jayasuriya, coming back for the third, was beaten by Vaughan's throw to Stewart.

Left-hander Jayasuriya had made 18 and looked to be on the verge of top form in the eighth over.

England's bowlers got on in the act six overs later.

Hoggard, who had been struggling with his run-up and frequently no-balled, produced a lifting delivery against Kumar Sangakkara.

The wicketkeeper flashed outside his off-stump and Flintoff, at second slip, took a fine head-high catch. Sangakkara had gone for 10 and Sri Lanka were 55 for two.

This match marks the start of Sri

Inzaghi sees no weaknesses

AFP, Florence

Italy striker Filippo Inzaghi believes the 'Azzurri' have no weaknesses going into the 2002 World Cup.

The AC Milan forward, top scorer for Italy under coach Giovanni Trapattoni and under the previous regime of Dino Zoff, is convinced that the 'Azzurri' have what it takes to win a fourth world title, a feat that would equal Brazil's record.

"This Italy team has no weak points," Inzaghi told journalists at the Coviciano base near Florence where Italy are preparing for the World Cup.

"We are working very well together and I am convinced we will be with the right spirit and form in Japan. This week we are recovering from the energy we have spent in the championship."

Inzaghi earlier Wednesday won a battle with strike rivals Christian Vieri and Vincenzo Montella by being given the number nine jersey traditionally worn by a team's star striker.

But it is a deal that will probably suit all parties as Vieri wears the number 21 with which he scored five goals in France 98 while Montella is given the number 20 jersey worn by Paolo Rossi in the 1982 World Cup when his six goals earned Italy the title and himself the golden boot.

Inzaghi is rooming with Vieri - the two have been firm friends since their days together at Atalanta - and he said, in time-honoured football fashion, that it was the coach who would decide who would start against Ecuador on June 3 in Sapporo.

What to watch

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English Premier Football League Arsenal vs Everton

Taped Version at 3:30 pm

Sportslive Tonight

Sport News

Live at 10:30 pm

Football Asia

Taped Version at 11:00 pm

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with clues and solution: YESTERDAY'S CRYPTOQUIP: MY DOG IS A VERY HARSH TASKMASTER. HE'S ALWAYS BARKING ORDERS AT EVERYBODY.

CUP CORNER

FROM PAGE 13

clampdown on diving if he gets the chance to win a penalty for England, The Sun reported.

And he is even ready to run the risk of a yellow card if he can win the spot-kick to edge England through to the last 16.

Scholes confessed: "If you get the slightest contact from a defender in the box then you go down."

"Diving has been going on for the last couple of years and has rightly been punished. But if it means winning a penalty for your team then I'm sure players will still try to do it."

World Cup referees in Korea and Japan have already been ordered to get tough on the cheats and comment by FIFA.

FIFA are also considering setting up a video review panel to punish guilty players after the game, if the referee misses a dive.

Yest Scholes said: "I can't see them giving out too many cards for diving. "I think if you want to try to win a penalty you will go over and then leave the decision to the officials and see how they interpret it."

Azhar listed for award

Cricket

REUTERS, New Delhi

Disgraced Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin, serving a life-ban over match-fixing, has been nominated for an Indian cricketer of the century award launched by the Wisden Cricketers Almanac.

He faces competition from former opener Sunil Gavaskar and batsman Sachin Tendulkar among 16 cricketers.

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble is the other current player besides Tendulkar to be shortlisted for the award.

Azharuddin was banned by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in 2000 after it conducted an internal inquiry into a report on corruption in cricket by India's federal Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

He has consistently denied any wrongdoing.

Batting legend Gavaskar was the first to cross the 10,000-run mark in Tests and his world record of 34 Test centuries still stands.

Former all-rounder Kapil Dev, who captained India to triumph in the 1983 World Cup before going on to claim the world record for most

test wickets (434) is also included in the list.

The nominees were chosen by a 35-member panel which includes many former Test players and is headed by former West Indies skipper Clive Lloyd.

The winner will be announced at a function in London on July 23.



MOHAMMAD AZHARUDDIN

The others chosen are Bishan Singh Bedi, Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, Vijay Hazare, Vijay Merchant, Tiger Pataudi, Dilip Vengsarkar, Gundappa Viswanath as well as the late Lala Amarnath, Dinkar Balwant Deodhar, Vinoo Mankad and CK Nayudu.

Kumble's jaw fixed

REUTERS, Bangalore

India leg-spinner Anil Kumble underwent surgery on Thursday to mend the jaw he fractured in last week's fourth Test against West Indies.

"The operation went well and he is recovering," Sanjiv Nair, one of the two doctors who carried out the operation, told the news agency.

Nair said the 45-minute procedure included fixing a plate to support the broken jaw, adding that Kumble would be staying in hospital overnight as a precaution.

"He just wants to recuperate, that's all," Nair said. "Maybe in five or six days he should be back in the nets."

Kumble's wife Chetana told the news agency that the spinner was doing "very well", though he was still in some pain.

"It is quite routine. Nothing extraordinary," she said.

Kumble, 31, India's most successful current bowler with 319 Test wickets, was hit by a rising ball from fast bowler Mervyn Dillon on Saturday when batting on the second day of the Test in Antigua.

Kumble is expected to regain full fitness for India's tour of England which starts in June.

Unmatched umpiring

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) claimed that their umpires made the right decision 19 times out of every 20 appeals during the 2001-02 Australian summer.

Australia drew 0-0 in a three-Test series with New Zealand before sweeping South Africa 3-0 and winning a triangular limited over series.

Former players and officials, including former West Indies fast bowler Michael Holding, have been critical in recent years of decisions seen to favour the home side in Tests played in Australia.

"From the 363 appeals made to Australian umpires during the two Test series and the (one-day) series, 345 decisions were correct," the ACB said.

"The umpires were at their best during the (one-day) series, when 96 per cent of the 225 appeals resulted in correct decisions."

ACB Umpiring Manager Geoff Allardice said the first trial of the

new umpiring technology was successful and the data from the 2001-02 season showed the umpires did a good job.

"However, given that this technology was instituted for the first time this year, it is difficult to compare the performance with years gone by," he said.

A video review process enabled officials to log every ball so umpires could review footage of each decision.

"If we want our umpires to improve, an effective way to do that is to sit down and review each decision and use footage to iron out deficiencies," Allardice said.

He likened the approach to that taken by Australia cricket team coach John Buchanan, whose computer-driven analysis techniques have helped make Australia the number one-ranked team in Test cricket.

Daryl Harper is the only Australian member of the eight-man elite panel of international match umpires appointed by the International Cricket Council in March.

Two umpires from the panel will stand in all Test matches and there

will be one member standing with a home umpire for one-day internationals.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has introduced specialist third umpires to the international panel for the first time in its latest move to improve umpiring standards.

The two on-field umpires can refer difficult decisions involving catches, stumpings, run-outs and boundaries to the third official, who adjudicates with the benefit of television replays.

"These officials will not perform on-field duties but will be dedicated to the increasingly specialist role of the third, or so-called TV umpire," the ICC said in a statement on Thursday.

The third umpires are Steve Davis (Australia), Jeremy Lloyds (England), Tony Hill (New Zealand), Shahid Wadwala (South Africa) and Ian Robinson (Zimbabwe).

The international panel provides officials for all one-day international matches and provides cover for the ICC's elite panel of eight full-time Test umpires.

Worried Indian media

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, London

The Indian media has called the national team's participation in the 2003 Cricket World Cup into question.

The Today newspaper believes there is a doubt over whether India will play in South Africa because of the government's hard-line views about playing matches against Pakistan.

India and Pakistan are in the same first round group and due to meet at Centurion next March.

But the two arch-rivals have had no cricketing contact since June 2000 because of political differences.

Those differences have intensi-

fied since Tuesday's attack on an Indian army camp at Jammu, which resulted in 34 deaths, which has been blamed on Kashmiri separatists.

Although the Pakistan government has denied any involvement, Indian Sports Minister Uma Bharti was quoted as saying: "When they are playing with blood, how can we play cricket with them?"

Today says her current stance could have far-reaching consequences.

"If Uma Bharti has her way, India and Pakistan may never play cricket again - anywhere, any time and in any tournament," the newspaper commented.

"Bharti's latest statement could not only throw the International Cricket Council's ambitious 10-year Test calendar in jeopardy, but also dangled a question mark over India's

participation in prestigious tournaments like the World Cup and the Champions Trophy in Sri Lanka in September."

The loss of the 1983 winners from the competition would be a massive blow to World Cup organisers.

South Africa has a large number of people of Indian descent, with many youngsters taking up the game at junior representative levels.

India's withdrawal would also deprive crowds of seeing some of the world's greatest players, including batsmen Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly and spin bowlers Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh.

The newspaper says the attack occurred only hours after Bharti approached Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee with a view to discussing a resumption of cricketing links with Pakistan, prompting her change of attitude.

Gustavo, Lleyton on course

Tennis

AFP, Hamburg

French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten and top seed Lleyton Hewitt powered into the quarter-finals of the Hamburg Masters Series on Thursday with straight sets wins over minor seeds.

Kuerten, only two weeks into his return to the fray since hip surgery, scored a 7-5, 6-2 win over Argentina's 15th seed Guillermo Canas while Hewitt was too strong for Czech 14th seed Jiri Novak, whom he dismissed 6-4, 6-3.

Swiss 11th seed Roger Federer also moved on with a 7-5, 6-4 success over Romanian Adrian Panaitescu and will now play Kuerten.

The second-seeded Brazilian is using the tournament primarily as an extensive workout for Roland Garros, which starts in ten days time.

The samba showman, champion here in 2000, took a while to warm up in the opening set but romped through the second to win in 1hr 25min and make it six wins in six outings - all on clay - against Hamburg debutant Canas.

"I think I can improve. When I get to my real level maybe I will be just as I was before. I think every match I go out there it's one more step for me," said Kuerten.

Clad in bright orange Kuerten made an efficient if unspectacular start, breaking for 3-1 and although

Canas broke back in the ninth game he double-faulted to concede the opening set in 52min.

Canas crucially missed two break chances at 2-2 and, having held, Kuerten cranked up his game to race through the final three games as Canas conceded by driving wide.

Hewitt, dubbed 'Rocket Rambo' by the German press and chasing his 15th career title, broke in the seventh game against Novak but

appeared to have landed millimetres out but which was given good by umpire Norm Chryst.

Novak took his unconverted break point count to ten in the eighth game as Hewitt, a semi-finalist here last year, regained his composure, moving to 5-3 against a rival he had beaten in both of their previous two meetings before sealing victory on the Novak serve after 1hr 40min.

The battling Adelaide has bounced back from a bout of chicken pox to lift titles at San Jose and Indian Wells this season but came here seeking a morale boost win following early defeats at Monte Carlo and again in the Rome Masters last week.

Hewitt will next face either Russian sixth seed Marat Safin or Argentina's Juan Ignacio Chela.

Another man booking his passage was Max Mirnyi, first-round conqueror of Pete Sampras, who ousted Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta, a finalist here in 1999.

On Wednesday the 24-year-old Zabaleta had ended the hopes of Australian Open champion Thomas Johansson of Sweden, a result which blew the Champions Race wide open.

But this time he was found wanting as Mirnyi advanced 6-3, 2-6, 6-4, balancing out six double faults with 11 aces.

Zabaleta smashed his racket at the end after failing to take advantage of his rival's inconsistency.



LLEYTON HEWITT