

Waqr hurt at not playing India

REUTERS/AFP, Melbourne

Pakistan cricket captain Waqr Younis said Tuesday he regretted being unable to play India for the last two years because of tensions over the disputed Kashmir region.

Fears of war have grown as India and Pakistan troops traded heavy fire this week across their frontier in disputed Kashmir.

"I would love to play against them but things are not really working out between the countries and the politicians," Waqr told a news conference.

"The world is missing a great game of cricket between Pakistan and India. Let's cross our fingers and see that things will get better."

India are next scheduled to play Pakistan in a limited-overs league match in next year's World Cup in South Africa in February-March.

The two countries have been drawn in separate groups in the International Cricket Council's Champions' Trophy in Sri Lanka in September, but will have to face each other if they make the final.

Lillee's school of pace opens

REUTERS, Perth

The search for the latest Dennis Lillee has begun with the opening of his school for pace bowlers -- but the new model may not necessarily be Australian.

The Dennis Lillee Fast Bowling Academy was launched on Tuesday by the Western Australian Cricket Association (WACA).

Former Australia paceman Lillee will help design programmes for the 31 young fast bowlers selected in the initial squad.

Since retiring as a player, the 52-year-old has helped coach young players round the world.

Now the WACA plan to encourage participation not only from other Australian states but from other cricketing nations like India, where Lillee has worked with young players in Madras.

The bouncy Perth wicket at the WACA Test venue is regarded as one of the best for fast bowlers in world cricket and was home to Lillee, Graham McKenzie and Terry Alderman during their Test careers.

The trio took a combined 771 Test wickets with Lillee claiming 355 from 70 matches.

Pace battle from today

Aussies bid to improve behaviour

Cricket

AFP/REUTERS, Melbourne

Widely criticised for their on-field sledging in recent matches, Australia will aim to be on their best behaviour when they meet Pakistan on Wednesday in the first match of a three-game one-day series.



WAQR YOUNIS

on the field earlier this year. Ponting said the comments had been light-hearted.

"We're not there yet, we're not where we'd like to be, but we're certainly going to work on that and certainly going to improve that as much as we can," Ponting told reporters.

"I've said all the way along I won't accept guys in the Australian side

no cause for concern, according to Pakistan captain Waqr Younis.

"I think they're perfect," Waqr told a news conference in Melbourne on Tuesday. "They play very aggressive cricket and I think this is very good for the game."

"I find them very aggressive and very competitive cricketers. I don't see anything wrong with that."

The match at Colonial Stadium will mark the first time Ponting has captained an Australian team at home.

The second game of the series will be played at the same venue on Saturday with the third game at the Gabba in Brisbane on June 19.

Officials from both teams told a media conference that they had yet to finalise their teams for the series-opener.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Michael Bevan, Andrew Bichel, Jason Gillespie, Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee, Darren Lehmann, Jimmy Maher, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Shane Warne, Shane Watson.

Pakistan (from): Waqr Younis (captain), Inzamamul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Shoaib Akhtar, Wasim Akram, Saeed Anwar, Younis Khan, Rashid Latif, Azhar Mahmood, Shoaib Malik, Imran Nazir, Mohammad Sami, Younus Youhana.

getting too personal with the things they say.

"We can still improve on our behaviour on the field, no doubt about that."

Ponting, however, added, "There's always going to be sledging in cricket or gamesmanship, whatever you like to call it."

But their sledging of opponents is

Series surely down under?

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia looks set to host a three-match Test series against Pakistan because of fears for safety on the subcontinent, an Australian Cricket Board (ACB) official said Tuesday.

ACB chief executive James Sutherland will meet Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials this week to discuss the possibility, an ACB spokesman said.

"Playing in Australia will be one of a number of options," he said.

PCB officials are here for a three-game limited-overs series starting on Wednesday in Melbourne.

Pakistan remains hopeful of staging a one-day series against Australia and New Zealand, followed by the Test series against Australia, but the volatile security on

the subcontinent seems certain to force the matches to be played elsewhere.

Captain Steve Waugh and star bowlers Shane Warne and Glen McGrath have already said they do not want to tour.

Pakistan manager Yawar Saeed said nothing would be decided until the end of June.

"All we would like is for the cricket must go on, there mustn't be a starvation of cricket," he said.

"Whatever the boards decide, we are quite happy to play wherever they decide."

Several neutral venues, including Sharjah and Morocco, have been put forward, but International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Malcolm Speed said Australia would be given first choice if the series were switched from Pakistan.

"Our current rules say the first option is to go to the visiting country

and see if it can be played there. If the tournament can be run at a profit, we would like it to go ahead," he said from London.

Only a handful of people watched Pakistan play the West Indies in Sharjah last year and it was forced to a neutral venue for Pakistan-Australia would be a money-loser.

Reports in the Australian media

Tuesday said the One Day series looked set to be played in late August through September in Cairns, Brisbane and Perth, with the Test series in Brisbane, Sydney and Perth in October.

Australia have not lost a Test series at home for 10 years, winning or drawing their last 14 series.

But this did not worry Saeed.

"I don't think one should be looking in life for advantages all the time, one should be prepared to fight it out wherever one has to play," he said.

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