

English prefer to relax

Cricket

AFP, Hobart

England's cricketers have eased off on their preparations ahead of playing Australia's second-best side, with acting captain Marcus Trescothick saying the team needed time off.

In preparation for the three-day game against Australia A, which starts at Hobart's Bellerive Oval on Friday, the English spent about two hours at the ground early on Wednesday.

There was no net practice and most of the players were content with some unchallenging work in the field.

Trescothick, who'll lead the team in Hobart as captain Nasser Hussain prepares to fly to Perth for the birth of his second child, was happy.

"Today was a good day," he said. "We had a good laugh and a run-around and let off a bit of steam."

The Somerset opener thought the team needed the relaxation after spending about six hours getting to Hobart from Brisbane on Tuesday,

which meant it couldn't be called a day off.

"People have to understand that we're away for a long time," he said. "Time off is as valuable as being



MARCUS TRESCOTHICK

in the nets because you can get so stale.

"Bad practice is no use at all. We have to have time off."

Trescothick said morale was okay: "We just need a bit of luck, to play well and get the guys in form."

He said he'd felt a little nervous at the start of the Brisbane Test, but

thought this was normal and a good thing.

But he admitted to being surprised by the way Australia started their first innings after being sent in. "The ball swung about a bit, but they played so positively and I think it shook us all slightly," he said.

He was working on a few technical aspects of his own batting, but wouldn't say what they were.

However he was scornful of claims that he'd become Australian bowler Jason Gillespie's batting bunny.

"It's more of a problem for the people who write about it than it is for me," he said.

Trescothick, who has captained England in a New Zealand tour match and a one-day international, said Hussain hadn't given him any advice.

While he would go in against Australia A trying to win, he saw the match primarily as a way for the team to get solid work in ahead of the second Test in Adelaide.

"Australia will play the game very seriously and we're not going to take it lightly," he said.

England plans a more intense practice on Thursday.

Ian rates Eng very highly

Cricket

REUTERS, Hobart

England are test cricket's number two team but have no chance against Steve Waugh's Australia side, former Australia wicketkeeper Ian Healy said on Wednesday.

Healy, 38, whose test career ended three years ago after a world record 395 dismissals, said captain Nasser Hussain's England simply failed to produce their best cricket against Australia and needed to relax.

"They've got to just lower all their expectations. They're not going to beat this Australian side and I don't think anyone will while (bowling duo Shane) Warne and (Glenn) McGrath are in the team," Healy was quoted as saying on the

Australian Broadcasting Corp. (ABC) Radio website.

"The team will have to change before Australia gets beaten, so they (England) have just got to lower all their expectations and start to try and play well and play to their ability level and forget about winning and losing and bouncing back, just get out there and play," Healy added.

Australia thrashed England by 384 runs in the first Ashes test in Brisbane last week. The second test of the five-match series starts in Adelaide on November 21.

Australia went into the series needing to win to hold top spot on the ICC Test Championship table ahead of South Africa, with England ranked fifth behind New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

England play Australia A in a three-day tour match in Hobart starting on Friday.

Hewitt hails Clijsters

AFP, Shanghai

Lleyton Hewitt took time out from his campaign at the season-ending Masters Cup here Tuesday to publicly congratulate his Belgian girlfriend, Kim Clijsters, for her stunning victory in the WTA Tour Championships -- and stake a claim for half her prize money.

Clijsters, 19, scored back-to-back victories over the dominant Williams sisters in Los Angeles to win the women's season finale and the accompanying 765,000-dollar pay cheque.

"It's obviously the biggest moment in her tennis career so far," Hewitt, the men's world number one, told reporters after beating Albert Costa in the first stage of the Masters Cup round robin format.

"It's an incredible achievement... she's got a good chance to go even higher in the rankings, I believe."

Asked if Clijsters' win meant extra cash for him, Hewitt stuck his tongue firmly in his cheek and said: "Yeah, it would be. I guess I get 50 per cent of that."



PHOTO: INTERNET

Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic exults after beating American Andre Agassi at the Masters Cup tournament in Shanghai yesterday.

Agassi's early setback

Tennis

AFP, Shanghai

Andre Agassi, bidding to overtake world number one Lleyton Hewitt at the Masters Cup, looked a long way from being the best player on the planet as he plunged to a straight-

sets loss to Jiri Novak at the Masters Cup here Wednesday.

The US star's 5-7, 1-6 loss was the worst start possible to his campaign to be the oldest player ranked top at the end of a season.

Agassi, dressed all in black, started the match brilliantly and screamed to a 5-2 lead before falling away to lose 11 of the next 12 games.

His meek surrender, handing victory to Novak with an easy unforced error off his normally consistent double-handed backhand on match point, summed up Agassi's day.

However the loss did not end the 32-year-old's tilt at glory.

Thanks to the unique round-robin format, Agassi can still pass Hewitt if he wins the tournament

with Hewitt failing to make the final.

Hewitt was due to play Carlos Moya later Wednesday in the other group.

Earlier in the day, big-serving Russian Marat Safin suffered an upset loss to gritty baseliner Albert Costa and faces the prospect of an early Masters exit.

Safin has been complaining since arriving in Shanghai about fatigue after playing 22 tournaments this year, and he was unable to push his weary body any further in his 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 loss.

It was the second loss in consecutive days for the third seed, who arrived as one of the favourites for the 3.75-million dollar event after winning the Paris Masters Series event earlier this month.

Following his loss to Costa and a straight-sets defeat to Moya on Monday, Safin has to now defeat Hewitt and rely on other results in their Red Group if he is to qualify for the semifinals.

Safin steam-rollered Costa, the eighth seed and reigning French Open champion, in the first set, serving seven aces to none and blasting 18 winners from the base-

line.

But Costa gradually started to wear down his tiring opponent on the slow indoor hardcourt, and claimed the second set when Safin dumped a forehand drop shot into the net.

Costa, who had not won a match indoors this year and endured a horrible second half of the season partly due to a back injury, broke early in the third set and held on to serve out the match in two hours and seven minutes.

Safin's sluggish footwork and aching body contributed to him hitting 37 unforced errors in the match to Costa's 14.

Costa said afterwards that Safin looked as if he was suffering from fatigue on the court.

"Maybe he was a little tired and he couldn't play at the top level," he said.

Costa said he felt he had a slight edge over some of the other players in the tournament because he has not played as many matches in the second half of the season.

"Now I'm feeling pretty good out there. Maybe I'm fresher than the other ones," he said.

Yugoslavia friendly Santini drops Lizarazu

Football

AFP, Paris

The absence of defender Bixente Lizarazu was the only surprise in the squad of 18 revealed Wednesday by French national coach Jacques Santini for the November 20 friendly against Yugoslavia at Stade de France.

For their final match of the season Santini opted to stick with the group which successfully delivered the European titleholders first three qualifiers for Euro 2004.

Midfielder Olivier Dacourt is out injured while Philippe Mexes and Bruno Cheyrou have been replaced by Emmanuel Petit and Olivier Kapo respectively.

In the absence of Bayern Munich's Lizarazu, Santini opted for Lyon's Jeremy Brechet who has figured in the squad of 20 for the last two matches but not the final 18.

Meanwhile, Real Madrid star playmaker Zinedine Zidane, who has recovered from lumbago, has been called up, but controversial striker Nicolas Anelka has once again been left in the cold despite his goal for Manchester City against Manchester United last Saturday.

The players will gather at the national training centre at Clairefontaine on the outskirts of Paris from next Monday.



BIXENTE LIZARAZU

SQUAD
Goalkeepers: Fabien Barthez (Manchester United/Eng), Gregory Coupet (Lyon)
Defenders: Marcel Desailly (Chelsea/Eng), William Gallas (Chelsea/Eng), Willy Sagnol (Bayern Munich/Ger), Mikael Silvestre (Manchester United/Eng), Lilian Thuram (Juventus/Ita), Jeremy Brechet (Lyon)
Midfielders: Eric Carriere (Lyon), Olivier Kapo (Auxerre), Emmanuel Petit (Chelsea/Eng), Claude Makelele (Real Madrid/Spa), Patrick Vieira (Arsenal/Eng), Zinedine Zidane (Real Madrid/Spa)
Strikers: Sidney Govou (Lyon), Thierry Henry (Arsenal/Eng), Steve Marlet (Fulham/Eng), Sylvain Wiltord (Arsenal/Eng)

England meet Australia in February

Football

AFP, London

England will face Australia in a friendly international at West Ham's Upton Park in February, the Football Association announced on Wednesday.

The February 12 clash will be the first time a full international has been staged at West Ham's east London home and will provide England with a tough test in the run up to crucial Euro 2004 qualifiers, notably against Turkey, later in the year.

"Australia have an excellent team now," England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson told the FA's website.

"We know this from the many players they have playing at the top

clubs in the Premier League.

"It's an ideal game for us to play and it will be nice to take England to Upton Park, which was the first ground I visited in this country as England manager."

England have played Australia five times, but never at home. They have won three and drawn two of their five previous meetings, emerging 1-0 victors in Sydney on their last encounter in 1991.

FA director of marketing and communications Paul Barber said: "We're delighted to be hosting this historic fixture."

"Australia are one of the fastest developing football nations and I'm sure this will be a fantastic occasion for fans of both countries, not least because it follows on so soon after the Ashes series."

England had initially planned a friendly against France but that was scrapped last month, leaving a shortlist of Denmark and Australia.

Rod sees bright future

Cricket

AFP, Adelaide

England cricket academy chief coach Rod Marsh is certain the nation's next crop of Test players will be talented and well-trained, but stops short of predicting they will reverse Australia's Ashes dominance.

Marsh, in his second season as head of the English academy, was appointed by the English Cricket Board to try to replicate the highly-successful programme he ran for 10 years in a similar role with the Australian academy.

With Australia's 384-run drubbing of England in the opening Gabba Test putting the team on course to retain the Ashes for an eighth successive time, the pressure is on Marsh to produce a generation of players capable of turning the tables.

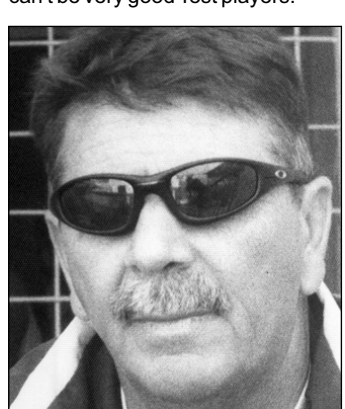
Marsh was unwilling on Tuesday to comment on the current series but was adamant the future of English cricket was bright, with the construction of a new academy at England's Loughborough University having started last week, and a talented group of youngsters under his guidance.

"The infrastructure is outstand-

ing, everything is in place," Marsh said here, where the English academy squad is training while the new facility is being built.

"I'm just hoping it's the academy that puts the final touch on these guys transition from junior cricket, to first-class, to Test cricket."

"There's no reason why they can't be very good Test players."



ROD MARSH

But Marsh, who had a role in developing many of the current Australian players, said he could not guarantee the production of a generation of players capable of breaking Australia's Ashes stronghold.

"I'm convinced that there are enough good young players for

England to be a very strong cricketing nation, that's all I'm going to say about this situation, what happens elsewhere is none of my business," he said.

Marsh said his most important task was to produce a new batch of pacemen, a job he admitted was becoming more urgent with injuries ravaging England's bowling stock.

The latest casualty, Simon Jones, who trained at the academy under Marsh, is with the academy squad in Adelaide after suffering a serious knee injury on the opening day of the Gabba Test.

"There are some good young fast bowlers in England, it's only a matter of time until they break through."

Marsh said he would prefer young pacemen not to be rushed into the Test side.

"I've always believed that a fast bowler is at their best at 25 to 35, not 20 to 30," he said.

"I'm quite happy for a bit of patience with these youngsters, when they do get the opportunity they will be ready."

"I'm more concerned about five or 10 years time then about tomorrow."

The current squad of 15 players, with an average age of 22.5, will be in Australia until March, apart from a break for Christmas and a four-week tour to Sri Lanka in February.

A Warne

FROM PAGE 13
 Test in Brisbane was on the improve. "The back is OK, it was a little bit stiff going into the first Test but (Australian physiotherapist) Errol Alcott did some really good work and as the Test went it just got better and better," he said.

Barry's complain

FROM PAGE 13
 bowl legally," Jarman said in a magazine article on Wednesday. "If he (Murilitharan) and others partially straighten their arm it's illegal."

"I knew it was going to happen, but it's too hot to handle. You bring it up in a meeting and they (the ICC) don't want to know about it."

Jarman, who was a match referee through to the 2000-01 season and handled Sri Lanka's Test series in New Zealand in 1994-95, said: "I've never been asked to do a game involving Sri Lanka since."

Muralitharan and Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar have been reported in the past but were found to have abnormalities in their bowling arm which led to their actions appearing suspect.

Sri Lankan Ruchira Perera bowled throughout this year's Lord's Test against England under increasing scrutiny from fans and media, without being called for throwing.

However, after the game ICC match referee Gundappa Viswanath confirmed umpires Srinivas Venkataraghavan and Daryl Harper had reported the young left-arm seamer after studying his action on video.

The 25-year-old was allowed to continue bowling as he worked on his action with a specialist adviser.

Aussie Open changes heat policy

AFP, Sydney

Australian Open officials on Wednesday released changes to the tournament's extreme heat policy in a bid to protect tennis players and fans at next year's grand slam event.

The first grand slam of 2003 will be held from January 13-26, when Melbourne's summer heat can be at its most severe.

Under the changes, the required maximum temperature for outdoor matches to be suspended will be lowered and, for the first time, the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) will be taken into account.

"We have a responsibility to ensure we are looking after the best interests of everyone coming to the tournament, whether as players, spectators or our on-court officials, particularly ballpersons," Australian Open chief executive Paul McNamee said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Melbourne's summer weather is one of the tournament's great attractions."

"By taking these proactive steps to further refine our policy, we can ensure that even on the days when temperatures really soar, the appropriate safeguards are in place."

ICC gets

FROM PAGE 13
 the stands to monitor the crowd. The BCCI has also suggested that spectators be prevented from carrying in objects that could be used as missiles.

"In case any spectator indulges in activity that could lead to untoward incidents, he should be immediately taken into custody."

"If there is more than an isolated case in any particular stand, it should be vacated by police with the help of ground authorities."

The BCCI was also in touch with the West Indies board president Wes Hall to assure him of the steps being taken to ensure player safety in India.

"We are hopeful the West Indies cricket board would find the steps satisfactory and advise the team appropriately," he added.

Paradorn's potential

Tennis

AFP, Shanghai

Tennis is set to boom in Asia on the back of Thai sensation Paradorn Srichaphan and a surging interest in China, the sport's leaders said here Wednesday as Shanghai hosted the big-ticket Masters Cup.

Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) chief executive Mark Miles said Paradorn's spectacular climb up the world rankings this year had dramatically helped an already growing enthusiasm among Asians for tennis.

"The phenomenon obviously in the past year has been Paradorn," Miles said.

"He has the potential to be the next superstar in this part of the world. We have a promotional plan for him. We really think his success has to be a banner for the game to help spread the popularity of the sport further."

Paradorn has become one of Asia's most high-profile sportsmen after surging from 126 in January to finish the year ranked 16, claiming the scalps of the world's top two players, Lleyton Hewitt and Andre Agassi, along the way.

But Miles and the sport's other heavyweights meeting on the sidelines of the Masters Cup, which is the biggest sporting event ever to be held in China, said Paradorn was just one reason for their growing optimism about Asian tennis.

Miles cited a recent sponsor's survey that showed tennis was the number one "aspirational" sport among China's billion-plus population.

"This means among all the sports in China, tennis is the one that the young people see as maybe being out of reach at the moment but something they can have a future in," he said.

"We believe the sport will really grow in this country."

Asian Tennis Federation (ATF) vice president Herman Hu endorsed Miles' comments, saying there were more than one million children in China playing mini-tennis and a Chinese equivalent of Paradorn would one day emerge.

said. "It's a natural evolution. With the more people interested in tennis, the results will come."

The season-ending Masters Cup, where the top eight players compete in the year's most elite field for a prize pool of 3.7 million dollars, is also being seen as a springboard for realising the potential in China.

"This is the biggest international professional sporting event to be held in terms of prizemoney, ticket sales and television exposure," Miles said.

Interest in the tournament has been strong, with more than 8,200 people filling the 9,500-capacity stadium at Shanghai's New



PARADORN SRICHAPHAN

International Expo Centre on Tuesday's first day of play.

The tournament has also been broadcast live throughout China.

Hu said the ATF had monitored a surging interest in the sport across the whole region, not just China.

"Asian tennis is growing very fast, perhaps (we now have) in the order of tens of millions of players," he said.

The Australian Open's chief executive, Paul McNamee, also attended the meeting of the sports' leaders here and said his Grand Slam was increasingly positioned towards the Asia-Pacific region.

He said 48 percent of the Australian Open's international television audience was in Asia, making it the tournament's biggest market.

McNamee said Vietnam and

Indonesia took a broadcast of this year's tournament for the first time and South Korea had recently signed on, also for the first time, for the January, 2003, event.

The upcoming Australian Open has also been rebranded with the slogan: "Grand Slam of the Asia Pacific", as part of a move to integrate more closely with the region.

He said the Australian Open's embracing of Asia began in earnest in 1996 with the start of wildcards for Asia's top male and female players.

Asian players have also been invited to train with Australia's best players at Melbourne Park in the lead-up to the 2003 Australian Open.

But, as Pat Cash sparked a revival in Australian tennis with his 1987 Wimbledon victory, all Asian eyes are on Paradorn.

At 16 in the rankings, Paradorn has joined Indian great Vijay Amritraj as the equal highest-ranked Asian player in history and is set to climb higher in 2003.

McNamee pointed out that the player to have captured the hearts of most Asians over the past year was Michael Chang, an American of Chinese background.

"We need to change that perception and have someone from Asia (as the tennis hero), McNamee said.

Salam Smriti hockey

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Hockey Club finished Group-B runners-up to reach the semifinals of the Salam Smriti Hockey Tournament playing a goalless draw with Tejgaon Agragami Club in their last group match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

They will play the first semifinal against Group-A champions Bachelors Club on Friday at 2.30pm while Group-B champions Shishu Kishore Sangha will meet Combined SC in the other semifinal on Saturday at 2.30pm at the same venue.

The final match will be held on Monday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
 1 Coven members
 5 Bartlett or Anjou
 9 Be subpar
 12 Millay or Ferber
 13 Move gingerly
 14 Org. for medicine
 15 "Okay-doke!"
 17 Nourished
 18 Impetuous
 19 "Loves me (not) me" decider
 21 AMPAS award
 24 Musical group
 25 Prohibits
 26 Optimistic believers
 30 Swelled head
 31 Mill fodder
 32 Complete
 33 Ever-greens
 35 Tarzan's transport
 36 Convince
 37 University group
 38 Bother

DOWN
 1 "Yo!"
 2 Com-motion
 3 Wilde-beast
 4 Like some cream
 42 Owing
 43 Alternate phrase
 48 Commer-cials
 49 Glance through
 50 Thought statement
 51 Bumped into
 52 Half-scores
 53 Peace-keeping org.
 54 "Yo!"
 55 Com-motion
 56 Wilde-beast
 57 "Yo!"
 58 Com-motion
 59 Wilde-beast
 60 "Yo!"
 61 Com-motion
 62 Wilde-beast

Solution time: 25 mins.

ACROSS
 1 COVEN
 5 BARTLETT
 9 BE
 12 MILLAY
 13 MOVE
 14 OMAHA
 15 OKAY-DOKAY
 17 NOURISHED
 18 IMPETUOUS
 19 LOVE ME
 21 AMPAS
 24 MUSICAL
 25 PROHIBITS
 26 OPTIMISTIC