

'Give us the Ashes'

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has made a public appeal for England to hand the Ashes urn over to Australia...



JOHN HOWARD

In a statement splashed across the front page of Sydney's Daily Telegraph tabloid, Howard said the time had come for England to surrender the Ashes trophy.

His comments came after the victory over England on Sunday in the third test of the five-match series gave Australia a run of eight successive Ashes series wins.

What to Watch

- Sportline Tonight Live at 8:00 pm
English Premier Football League Live at 8:55 pm
South Africa vs Pakistan First ODI Live at 1:55 pm

Money doesn't

"If money was my intent, it would be much less stressful and easier to play county cricket (in England) and earn more money than I can by playing for Australia..."

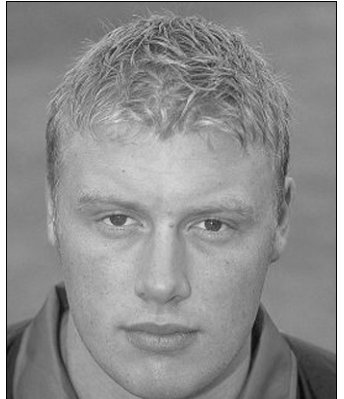
Waugh was this week left out of Australia's preliminary 30-man squad for the World Cup one-day cricket contest next year...

Sydney send

The newspaper speculation is that Hohns will have to drop Waugh. Some commentators are saying that Waugh has the ideal match to bow out in Sydney in New Year...

Flintoff feels let down

January, said of Flintoff in a recent interview. But Flintoff, whose ability to keep his six foot four inch frame in shape has been criticised in the past...



ANDREW FLINTOFF

"I've done everything that has been asked of me, yet the injury is taking longer to heal than anybody thought," he told Wednesday's edition of The Sun.

Ian wants Nasser's head

told Tuesday's edition of the Daily Mirror. "England must bit the bullet and bid farewell to Alec Stewart, Andy Caddick and, I'm sorry to say, Nasser Hussain as Test captain."

Botham said he had "often waved the flag for England since Hussain took over and he deserves the nation's gratitude for restoring their credibility."

Former England captain Ian Botham has said current skipper Nasser Hussain should lose his job in the wake of the team's Ashes thrashing in Australia.

PCB's WC, ICC agenda

international cricket during next year's World Cup. Meanwhile, Pakistan will use a meeting this week with the ICC to press for its return to hosting matches following several nations' refusal to play here due to security concerns...

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SA officials to check Kenya security

South African security experts are to visit Kenya early next month to discuss the security measures for the two matches the country is due to host in the 2003 cricket World Cup...

Lanka bowled out cheaply

The freak dismissal of Marvan Atapattu sparked a Sri Lankan collapse in the fourth one-day international against South Africa at De Beers Diamond Oval here on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka were all out for 184 after racing to 58 for no wicket in the first ten overs. Atapattu, who made a match-winning 123 not out in the third match of the series in Benoni Sunday, was in magnificent form before he was run out for 39.

Scoreboard after Sri Lanka's innings in the fourth one-day international against South Africa at De Beers Diamond Oval on Wednesday:

Table with columns: SRILANKA, Atapattu run out (Boucher) 39, Jaysuriya c McKenzie b Donald 27, Sangakkara c McKenzie b Kallis 1, De Silva c Ntini b Kallis 0, Jayawardene lbw b Donald 9, Tillakaratne b Pollock 18, Arnold c McKenzie b Pollock 50, Vaas lbw b Pollock 4, Nissanka c Boucher b Klusener 1, Fernando c Boucher b Donald 2, Gunaratne not out 13, Extras: (b-4, lb-8, nb-2, w-6) 20, Total: (All out in 47.3 overs) 184, Fall of wickets: 1-58, 2-61, 3-64, 4-78, 5-97, 6-131, 7-146, 8-152, 9-155

South Africa: Shaun Pollock, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Neil McKenzie, Jacques Kallis, Jonty Rhodes, Lance Klusener, Mark Boucher, Robin Peterson, Allan Donald, Makhaya Ntini. Impres: Ian Howell (South Africa) and Russell Tiffin (Zimbabwe).

Pakistan reveal team for U-15 Asia Cup

Pakistan was expecting tough competition from India and Sri Lanka in next week's under-15 Asia Cup, batting coach Zaheer Abbas said Wednesday after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced the squad.

"We have high hopes from the team in the Asia Cup, and our main rivals would be India and Sri Lanka," batting legend Abbas told AFP. The first ever under-15 Asia Cup is scheduled to be played in Dubai and Sharjah from December 7 to 22, with 14 teams taking part.

Squad: Fazal Mohammad Khan (captain), Adnan Raza (vice captain), Suleman Ali, Fayyaz Ahmed, Yasir Arafat, Salman Akbar Butt, Owais Ahmed, Raza Ali Dar, Mansoor Ajjad, Fahad Zaman, Mohammad Umer Khaliq, Jamsheed Ahmed, Nasir Ahmed, and Nawaz Sikander.

Mathieu hopes to rebound

Frenchman Paul-Henri Mathieu is looking forward to getting back on the tennis court after his shock defeat in the decisive game of the Davis Cup final against Russian Mikhail Youzhny, he said.

"I still have the same dreams: to give my maximum in order to get as high as possible," the 20-year-old told French sports daily L'Equipe. "Big defeats make you improve as well as great victories."

Mathieu said he never felt the match, which he lost 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 7-5, 6-4, was slipping from his grasp. "Even in the fifth set, I came back for 3-3. No, even when he was serving for the match, I was still there. I hoped I would come back and told myself that he was not mentally strong. But he was."

China in last four

China breezed into the semifinals of the women's field hockey World Cup here on Wednesday with a 2-0 win over New Zealand.

The Chinese, who had to beat the Kiwis to make it through after South Korea's 6-2 victory over Scotland earlier in the day, saw off the New Zealanders with two first-half goals. They will meet the in-form Dutch in the semifinals. China drew 1-1 with the Netherlands at the Champions Trophy in Macau in August, an event the Chinese went on to win.

Fu Baorong tipped in a pass from Hou Xiaolan in the 13th minute and Cheng Hui tapped in a rebound from a Zhou Wanfeng shot four minutes from the break to secure victory here.

China's coach said she was aiming to set up a final against either Australia or Argentina, who will play Friday's other semifinal. "I was satisfied with the result and to get into the semi-finals but it was not my personal goal just to make the semi-finals as I have had a third place in a World Cup before," said Kim Chang-Back.

Australia has not beaten Argentina since the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, with Argentina winning three and three matches drawn. Australia's coach said he was looking forward to taking on the Argentinians with home advantage. "Argentina is a quality team but their game today was flat too," said David Bell.

"We are looking forward to playing Argentina." Australia's co-captain, Louise Dobson, said the home side would win. "We think we can beat Argentina," she said. England jumped from fifth to third place in Pool B after winning 3-0 over Spain, earning the right to play off for fifth to eighth place.

England needed three goals to get ahead of Spain on goal difference and scored them in style. Helen Grant scored on five minutes, Jane Smith added a second midway through the second half and Anna Bennett chipped in a loose ball seconds from time.

In the earlier Pool A match, Germany defeated Ukraine 5-2. Pool A cellar-dwellers Russia held undefeated Argentina goalless for 54 minutes until top-scorer Agustina Garcia popped up to settle a meaningless encounter.

In Pool B, Netherlands beat United States 5-2 and South Africa demolished Ireland 6-0. Japan held Australia to a 1-1 draw but had no influence on the pool standings with Australia staying in second place and Japan in fifth.

Thursday is a rest day for all teams during which the International Hockey Federation will announce the men's and women's players of the year.

Sampras still doubtful

September and has hinted he may retire. His wife Bridgette gave birth to their first child last month.

Under ATP rules, the top 100 ranked men were automatically entered into the tournament unless they had notified organisers they would not be playing. The only player to do that was American Todd Martin, who lost the 1994 Australian Open final to Sampras.

The women, unlike the men, have to nominate themselves for the tournament and organisers said 97 of the top 100 had signed up to play.

The three exceptions were former world number one Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, who has retired, Sandrine Testud, who is pregnant, and world number nine Jelena Dokic, who has refused to play in Australia again. Defending champion Jennifer Capriati was among the nominees, along with world number one Serena Williams and her big sister Venus.

Three times Australian Open champion Martina Hingis also appeared on the list despite recently undergoing ankle surgery. "It's great to see that triple champion Martina has indicated that she wants to play," Australian Open chief executive Paul McNamee said in a statement.

"Like her we'll be keeping our fingers crossed that she'll be fit in time for January." Australia's world number one Lleyton Hewitt headed the list of entries in the men's event while Andre Agassi is going back for a shot at a fourth title at Melbourne Park.

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In King Viv's court

FROM PAGE 13 through my contribution and aggressive attitude my team was successful. DSS: You never used a helmet against the fast bowlers. Was there any particular reason for that?

VR: Not really. It's just like driving a racecar. If you are going to worry about the speed in which you are driving or if you worry about running out of the track--- you know, you can't win many races. Accidents are bound to happen. I felt comfortable without a helmet and if I got hurt or seriously injured out in the field, there's no better place to experience that than in the middle.

DSS: When someone plays aggressive cricket these days, invariably his style is compared to that of Viv Richards. How does that make you feel? VR: Well that's really nice. If you see your name being mentioned even today that is great.

DSS: Critics say that if you had played against bowlers like Roberts, Marshall, Holding or Garner, you would not have been as successful as you are today. What's your answer to this criticism? VR: Never, because I played against the best bowlers that the world had to offer. So, that's not true.

DSS: You gave an impression of being aggressive and extremely confident on the field. Do you believe that such an aura is vital for success in cricket? VR: Most certainly. It's like Mohammad Ali's philosophy. When he was in the ring he believed he was the best. And even though he had respect for other performers, he still knew he was the best. It's the same when I was there.

DSS: Which were the bowlers you found difficult to negotiate in your time? VR: Oh, there were many like Chandrasekhar, Imran Khan. Abdul Qadir was also a very good bowler. DSS: Which present day batsmen impress you? VR: I think Sachin is a marvelous batsman. He has his own style. Ricky Ponting also has his own style. I believe Sehwag is the most aggressive batsman. Sachin is a little cautious these days. But when I see Sehwag, it gives me excitement because that's the way I played. It's nice to see him taking on the bowlers. It's very refreshing.

DSS: You retired from the game in 1991 and after all these years you have come to serve West Indies cricket in a different capacity. What took you so long to get involved in your country's cricket? VR: Well, I wanted a break after playing for so many years. I wanted to do something different. I worked for West Indies tourism department. Later I became an ambassador and all that stuff. There are so many things that I wanted to do apart from playing cricket. But I started to miss cricket. I started to miss something, which has given me my livelihood, something, which I had enormous amount of respect for. So I decided that I won't stay in the wilderness any longer. Then it coincided with the proposal from the West Indies Board and I accepted that.

DSS: What are the major difficulties you are facing now in the West Indies? How do you plan to overcome it? VR: The selectors come under lot of fire in the West Indies every time the team fails. But I am a reasonably strong man regarding what I want to do. DSS: The present West Indies team is a mixture of young guns and experienced players like Brian Lara and Carl Hooper. How is the team jelling as a unit? VR: I think they have jelled well. The way they have played the one-day tournament in India and in Bangladesh, it shows that they are mentally strong enough even without Hooper and Lara. I think that's a plus point for West Indies cricket. Now we have the belief that even if the experienced players are not there the team can still perform. That's very important.

DSS: What is your dream now with the present West Indies team? Do you think they can be a serious contender in next year's World Cup? VR: Oh, yes! They are going to be a serious contender. Someone asked me that who is going to be the dark horse and I said the West Indies will be the dark horse.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a CRYPTOQUIP section at the bottom.