

Chris eyes Alec's spot

AFP, Nottingham

Chris Read believes he is ready to step into Alec Stewart's shoes as England's first choice wicketkeeper.

Read was in fine form in England's recent one-day matches against South Africa and Zimbabwe and has put himself in the frame for a place in the England squad to be named Friday for the first Test against South Africa at Edgbaston.

"I now believe I have got what it takes to play both forms of the game. I know my own game plans so much better than I did four years ago," Read said.

The 24-year-old keeper has three Test caps to his name from the summer of 1999 but now feels that his experience at county level plus 19 one-day international appearances have sharpened his game.

"When I played for England first time around I was nowhere near the complete cricketer and still don't think I am, if there is such a thing. But the fact is I am a far better player now, having learnt so much over those years just through the experience of playing first-class cricket and analysing my own game."

The Nottinghamshire keeper may have to bide his time for a second chance at Test level.

The 40-year-old Stewart is England's second-highest run-scorer behind Graham Gooch in Test history and his country's most prolific batsman at one-day international level, as well as first-choice behind the stumps.

"Alec has been a terrific servant for England all told and I don't dwell too much on how he has done in the past. I just try and do my job as it's required for the team in any given situation," said Read.

"Certainly, having done a lot of batting with Nottinghamshire and the Academy over the last 12 months I am very keen to make a statement with the bat and contribute runs."

King relaxes rules

AFP, Washington

United States Fed Cup captain Billie Jean King, struggling to field a competitive line-up, has compromised the hardline rules that chased away Jennifer Capriati and Lindsay Davenport.

The 59-year-old tennis legend said Wednesday she has smoothed over a flap with Davenport and ended a ban on personal coaches attending US workouts in advance of this weekend's quarter-final tie here against Italy.

King, whose hard-line stance on the coaching issue led to Capriati's dismissal from a 2001 Fed Cup squad, allowed eighth-ranked Chanda Rubin and 18th-rated Meghan Shaughnessy to have their coaches attend workouts.



Scene from the schools kabadi match between Bhasantek High and Islamia High at the outer stadium yesterday.

Cagers accorded reception

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Basketball Federation (BBF) accorded a reception yesterday to the national basketball team for their achievement in the Asian Basketball Confederation qualifying tournament in New Delhi.

Bangladesh improved their rank bagging bronze medal in the tournament. After losing to gold medalists Uzbekistan and hosts India, the Bangladesh cagers bounced back to secure the third place defeating Nepal and Sri Lanka in the Middle Asia Zone.

The victory over Sri Lanka was their first against the islanders in five meetings.

Federation officials were hopeful the team would do well in the upcoming SARRC tournament which Bangladesh hosts from December 19-24. Nitol-Tata is likely to sponsor the regional meet.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman, who attended the reception as chief guest, assured that a modern basketball court in six divisional headquarters would be constructed.

Abdul Matlub Ahmed, chairman of Nitol group, declared cash award for the players. Each player will get Tk 5,000. But declared the amount would be five times better if hosts

Schools kabadi

SPORTS REPORTER

Bhasantek High School earned a massive 63-28 victory against Islamia High School in the boy's group of the schools kabadi competition at the outer stadium court yesterday.

In other matches, Shahid Nabi High School scored a 17-6 win against Islamia Adarsha High School, Ansar & VDP defeated Khilgaon Government Staff Quarters High School 37-18 and Dolaipar High School beat Millat High School 37-18.

UAE targets ODI status

AFP, Karachi

The United Arab Emirates is striving to get a berth in cricket's 2007 World Cup with an aim to achieving one-day international status, UAE's Indian coach Syed Abid Ali said Wednesday.

"I see a lot of potential in UAE cricket and hope that our targets of winning a berth in the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies and getting the one-day status from the International Cricket Council (ICC) are achieved," Ali told this news agency.

UAE featured in the 1996 World Cup co-hosted by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka but failed to qualify for the next two in 1999 and 2003.

Ali, 61, who is here as coach of the UAE youth team competing in the Youth Asia Cup, played 29 Tests and four one-day matches for India between 1967 to 1975.

"Since we are in ICC's high performance teams, both the ICC and Asian Cricket Council (ACC) are helping us and now it's up to the boys to prove themselves," he said. Under Ali, the UAE retained the ACC Trophy last year.

All disputed the idea that ICC has taken a strong stance on giving rights to new countries after Bangladesh's dismal showing since being granted Test status in 2000.

"No, even after what happened to Bangladesh, ICC has been actively helping the other fledgling countries to grow," he said.

The former Indian all-rounder sees good prospects in the resumption of ties between Pakistan and India.

"I feel the more cricket is played between Pakistan and India the more they come close and the relationship is normalised," said Ali, who could play only one exhibition match in Pakistan in 1970 during his career.

India snapped bilateral cricketing ties with Pakistan in the aftermath of an attack on its parliament in 2001 which New Delhi blamed on militants based in Pakistan.

However, the recent peace overtures raised hopes of resumption of cricketing ties in near future.

India A pile on the runs

AFP, London

India took control of their tour match against Surrey at The Oval on Wednesday thanks to some impressive batting with centuries from Sridharan Sriram, Gautam Gambhir and Ambati Rayudu.

Resuming on 235 for two left-hander Sriram was just eight shy of his century while Gambhir was digging in on 43.

Sriram hit triple figures in 159 minutes from 126 balls with 17 boundaries before being caught behind off the bowling of England one day international Rikki Clarke on 115.

Vijay Bharadwaj only managed seven runs but Rayudu then swept to 101 in just 103 deliveries with 15 boundaries and two sixes.

By the time the tourists declared at 462 for four, Gambhir was also into triple figures, amassing 130.

Sreyas had made 39 without loss from their 12 overs of the second innings in reply with Jonathan Batty unbeaten on 27, but they were still some 250 runs behind.

Zondeki

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(27) played positively, while Aaron Laraman's carefully-compiled 41 not out pushed Somerset towards 250.

When they closed five runs short of that figure there was a chance for Gibbs to play himself back into form.

But the South African opener could manage only 17 before edging a lifting delivery from Steffan Jones to wicketkeeper Gazzard.

Kirsten and Dippenaar took the score comfortably to 99 before Kirsten got a leading edge to off-spinner Wes Durston and lobbed a catch to cover.

Dippenaar went on to a half-century off 66 balls with nine fours.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the second day of the three-day tour match between Somerset and South Africa on Wednesday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 326 for 4 declared (G Smith 152, G Kirsten 66, N McKenzie 66 not out)

SOMERSET: First innings (overnight 38-0)

Woodbrow Willoughby 55

Bryant b Zondeki 39

Parsons c Gibbs b Zondeki 1

Burns c Pretorius b Willoughby 35

Blackwell c Willoughby b Zondeki 19

Laraman not out 41

Gazzard c Tsolekile b Zondeki 27

Durston c Smith b Zondeki 8

Extras: (lb-7, nb-11, w-2) 20

Total: (For 7 wkts decl in 51 overs) 245

Fall of wickets: 1-100, 2-104, 3-122, 4-144, 5-185, 6-235, 7-245

Did not bat: Andrew, Gilder, Jones

Bowler O M R W

Pretorius 15 1 93 0

Willoughby 17 7 38 2

Zondeki 11 0 64 5

Adams 4 0 22 0

Peterson 4 0 21 0

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings

Kirsten c Gilder b Durston 42

Gibbs c Gazzard b Jones 17

Dippenaar not out 52

McKenzie not out 14

Extras: (nb-1) 1

Total: (For 2 wkts in 39 overs) 126

Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-99

To bat: Smith, Peterson, Tsolekile, Adams, Pretorius, Willoughby, Zondeki

Bowler O M R W

Gilder 7 0 32 0

Jones 10 1 45 1

Andrew 6 2 8 0

Laraman 3 1 8 0

Durston 8 1 19 1

Parsons 5 0 14 0

A test by Aussie fire

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team, but instilled by his successes as coach of Sri Lanka, he sees the Australian tour as a wonderful opportunity for his players.

"When things are tough in international cricket it's the hard things you do rather than the soft options that I'm looking for," he said.

"I'm really interested to see how the players react to difficult periods which is always on when you're playing good sides like Australia.

"You don't get this opportunity very often and this is a great place to learn what it is all about."

"When you're playing really good sides some of our better ones might just come across and that's what I am hoping, but everyone will be taking back with them some little thing where they need to do to improve," he said.

"To me it doesn't matter if you're bowled out for 50 here, as long as they can show me that they can fight and they're not taking the soft options."

"There's no disgrace if you do get beaten against the team like Australia, as long as these boys are keen to improve their own game by going about it in the right way, and that's all I'm interested in."

Australia has reverted to a four-strong bowling attack after playing five bowlers in the April-May series against the West Indies in the Caribbean.

Australia will go in with a fast bowling attack of Glenn McGrath (425 wickets), Jason Gillespie (163) and Brett Lee (119) with Stuart MacGill (114) offering the leg-spin option.

Fast bowler Andy Bichel and left-arm wrist-spinner Brad Hogg were left out of the eleven.

"We thought it was better to go back to the regulation formula of just four bowlers than five bowlers," Waugh said.

"Stuart MacGill has been playing English county cricket so he's ready to go, and the three quicks just need a break, so they'll be fine."

Australia are going into a Test match in the unique situation of hardly touching a bat or ball for the last month, as they recover from a grueling playing schedule of 10 months' continuous cricket, but Waugh is far from perturbed.

"I think a month off was good preparation for the guys, mentally and physically, they've been going 10 months straight, you can't keep that up, so I think it will do the team a lot of good having some time off and relaxing and getting away from cricket," he said.

"It's a positive, that the guys have only got back into it a week ago, they'll be fresh for the game and ready to go."

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Matthew Hayden, Justin Langer, Ricky Ponting, Darren Lehmann, Steve Waugh (captain), Martin Love, Adam Gilchrist, Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Stuart MacGill, Glenn McGrath, Andy Bichel (12th man).

BANGLADESH: (from): Khaled Mahmud (captain), Javed Omar, Khaled Mashud, Habibul Bashar, Mohammad Rafique, Hannan Sarker, Mohammad Ashraful, Al-Shabir, Monjurul Islam, Alok Kapali, Sanwar Hossain, Tareq Aziz, Tapan Baisya, Anwar Hossain Monir, Mashrafe bin Mortaza.

"It's a positive, that the guys have only got back into it a week ago, they'll be fresh for the game and ready to go."

"I hope so. I would never individualise, we need contributions from right across the board."

"That could come from the least likely area."

"We've been lucky in the warm-up games, we've been playing 12 players as agreed with both teams."

"We've had an opportunity to have a good look at the ability to go in with four quicks as opposed to three and maybe a couple of spinners."

"That might not be a bad combination. That decision will be made together with the captain after we have a decent look at the wicket later on in the practice today."

"The area that differentiates

between the good sides and the ones

that are learning to be good is the

ability to make the right decisions,

whether you are a bowler or a bats-

man."

"The Bangladesh team will do

very well to improve their perfor-

mances if they make more correct

decisions, so that becomes a bit

different."

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