

Furore over Smith affair

Football

AFP, Manchester

England's international squad and their Football Association employers fell out again on Friday over the handling of the Alan Smith affair.

A month after the team threatened to strike over the Rio Ferdinand drug test row, the two sides were at loggerheads once again on Friday just two days before England face Denmark in a friendly at Old Trafford.

Football Association chief executive Mark Palios said that England's players were "angry" about the Smith selection saga and a clear-the-air meeting with them has been scheduled for later Friday.

The Leeds United striker was called up by Sven Goran Eriksson following an injury to Aston Villa's Darius Vassell but he was then kicked out of the squad when the FA realised Smith had been arrested for throwing a bottle into the stands during his team's League Cup defeat to Manchester United in October.

Asked to describe the FA's current relationship with the England players in the wake of the Smith affair, and the ongoing Ferdinand drugs test row, Palios said: "It is extremely difficult at the moment."

"Yes the players are angry in terms of their perception of the Alan Smith affair and we are meeting them to discuss it."

The FA announced that, as a result of the Smith fiasco, they will review their selection procedures when players are under police investigation.

"I think we could have been smoother in our communication and we have already instigated a review to ensure that we don't end up again in the situation we had -- but I wouldn't say that we panicked," insisted Palios.

The FA's disciplinary department knew that Smith had a pre-arranged interview with police over the allegation.



ALAN SMITH

However, they were unaware that the Leeds striker was about to be arrested, albeit then being released on bail without any formal charges being laid against him over the incident on October 28 at Elland Road.

Smith hasn't played for the national team for 13 months but Eriksson turned to him after Vassell's injury.

Smith was dropped on Friday morning when it came to light that he had been arrested for throwing a bottle into the crowd during a match last month.

Then, just hours after Beattie had been called in, Football Association chiefs were forced to review his place because of a drink-driving conviction from last year.

However, the FA decided to keep him in the squad as they were "not looking retrospectively at cases".

England, who are already without the injured Michael Owen, last faced Denmark in the second round of the World Cup finals last year, a match Eriksson's side won 3-0.

Thomas Gaardsoe and Kenneth Perez could make their Denmark debuts after being named in Morten Olsen's squad.

Olsen has decided to introduce West Brom defender Gaardsoe and AZ Alkmaar striker Perez for the match.

"We have been following Kenneth Perez for quite some time," said Olsen. Perez helped his cause by scoring twice in Alkmaar's 3-2 recent defeat at AFC Ajax.

Beattie, whose last cap came in the Euro 2004 qualifier against Liechtenstein in September, is aiming to win his fifth cap at some stage during Sunday's proceedings.

The Southampton striker, who has scored seven times in the Premiership this season, was pleased to be given another chance.

Beattie hopes to put a rollercoaster week behind him by firing England to victory in their friendly international against fellow Euro 2004 qualifiers Denmark at Old Trafford here on Sunday.

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Giggs was the subject of transfer speculation towards the end of last season -- around the same time David Beckham's departure was first mooted -- but he said he is happy to pledge his future to the Red Devils.

The Wales midfielder turns 30 at the end of the month but that will not dim his desire to add to his haul of 21 winners' medals - the most by any player currently at Old Trafford.

"At my stage of life, I think that the next couple of years will be the best of my career," he said.

"If I have another three or four years left in me, I would like to retire at the top with Manchester United."

"I'm looking forward to adding to the medals I have already won with the club."

"And as far as I'm concerned, I still have a lot to achieve in football and that includes representing Wales in a major championship."

He added on the club's website, www.manutd.com: "After another four years, I would have thought it would be difficult for me to reproduce the form that I am capable of. It is only then I would start thinking about my future off the field."

"I certainly do not want to get to 40 and start thinking I quit too early. By the same token, you do not want to be struggling round the pitch at 37."

Giggs wants to end at MU

SPORTINGLIFE, London

Manchester United winger Ryan Giggs has revealed he wants to end his career at Old Trafford -- with a warning to defenders that he feels his best years are ahead of him.

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Rugby World Cup Australia shock New Zealand

AFP, Sydney

Australia powered into their third World Cup final here Saturday with a stunning upset 22-10 victory over favourites New Zealand at the Olympic Stadium.

A try from centre Stirling Mortlock and 17 points from the boot of Elton Flatley handed the 1999 defending champions a famous victory against an All Blacks side repeatedly rocked backwards by ferocious Australian tackling.

The win puts Australia into a final next Saturday against either England or France, who play their semi-final here Sunday.

New Zealand, whose points came from a converted captain Reuben Thorne try, now face a third place play-off on Thursday.

Abedin brothers

FROM PAGE 13 more former players in its activities, earlier appointed former national captain Faruque Ahmed as the chief selector.

Aminul Islam, also another national skipper, was made a member of the junior selection committee later. Besides, another former national captain Akram Khan toured Pakistan with the Bangladesh Under-19 team as the manager.

Sehwag, Sachin

FROM PAGE 13 lofting Styris's slower ball to long-off. Ganguly hit a 31-ball 33 batting at number three before Dravid smashed three sixes and five fours in his late cameo.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard of the Indian innings against New Zealand in a day-night match of the TVS Cup triangular one-day cricket series on Saturday:

INDIA Sehwag c Vincent b Styris 130 Tendulkar c Oram b Harris 102 Ganguly c Tuffey b Styris 33 Yuvraj c Harris b Mills 7 David not out 50 Laxman b Tuffey 3 Kaif not out 15 Extras: (lb-6, nb-1, w-6) 13 Total: (For 50 wks in 50 overs) 353 Fall of wickets: 1-182, 2-256, 3-283, 4-284, 5-303

Did not bat: Agarkar, Kumble, Kartik, Zaheer

Bowler O M R W Tuffey 9 1 69 1 Mills 10 0 54 1 Oram 7 0 67 0 Cairns 7 0 47 0 Styris 6 0 46 2 Vettori 6 0 35 0 Harris 5 0 29 1

NEW ZEALAND: Chris Cairns, Chris Nevin, Lou Vincent, Scott Styris, Craig McMillan, Ian Butler, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori, Daryl Tuffey, Kyle Mills

Toss: India. Umpires: David Shepherd (England) and K Hariharan (India).

Scores not settled

FROM PAGE 13 at the Bir Sheshthra Shaheed Mustafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

It turned into a clash of no-hopers once news of Abahani's qualification in the semifinals filtered through.

It was Arambagh's first point after two defeats. For Rahmatganj it was their second point in the tournament after their creditable draw against Abahani.

"They've always been correct with me and have never let me down,"



American Andy Roddick plays forehand against Guillermo Coria of Argentina in the Tennis Masters Cup semifinal on November 14.

Roddick rolls on

Tennis

AFP, Houston

World number one Andy Roddick advanced to the ATP Masters Cup semifinals, defeating Argentina's Guillermo Coria 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3 here Friday to reach a showdown with Wimbledon winner Roger Federer.

US Open champion Roddick blasted 12 aces past Coria, including on the final two points, to capture the round-robin finale and booked a rematch with Federer of a Wimbledon semifinal he lost in July.

Coria led 3-2 in the final set and 40-love in the sixth game when he blew the hard-fought match, losing 10 points in a row. He made five consecutive forehand errors to hand a break to Roddick, who then held at love.

Roddick broke again for a 5-3 lead and served out to love to end the match after one hour and 53 minutes. Roddick also beat Coria here in their only prior meeting last year in the semi-finals of the US Clay Court Championships.

Saturday's other semi-final sends eight-time Grand Slam winner Andre Agassi against Germany's sixth-seeded Rainer Schuettler in a rematch of January's Australian Open final that Agassi won 6-2, 6-2, 6-1.

"I go out there every match expecting a dogfight," Agassi said. "I'll make him play a great match to beat me. That's for sure."

Federer has a 4-1 record against Roddick, including a 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 6-3 victory in July's Wimbledon semi-finals. Roddick's lone victory over Federer

came in August at Montreal during Roddick's run of 19 consecutive victories and three hardcourt titles in a row, including his first Grand Slam crown at Flushing Meadows.

Agassi, who has ended a two-month layoff here, is 2-1 against Schuettler, who lost his final round-robin match to Spain's Carlos Moya 7-5, 6-4 Friday.

Schuettler beat Agassi in their last meeting three months ago at Montreal. "I hope it will be fun," Schuettler said. "I've nothing to lose. He's such a great player. I didn't expect to be in the semis before I came here."

Winning the title would allow Federer to take the top prize of 1.5 million dollars and leap over French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero for second in the year-end ATP rankings after he beat the Spaniard 6-3, 6-1

Friday. Federer won each set in 27 minutes to level his career mark with Ferrero at 3-3. Ferrero won his most recent prior meeting on his way to an October title at Madrid.

Federer, whose 76 triumphs and six titles this year are ATP-bests, was unbeaten in the round-robin last year in Shanghai as well but lost to eventual champion Lleyton Hewitt in the semifinals.

Spain's poor showing at the outdoor hardcourt Masters Cup should not be taken as a bad omen for their Davis Cup final against Australia in two weeks on Melbourne grass, Ferrero warned.

"It's only one bad week," Ferrero said. "I haven't played very good matches. I have to think of Australia and forget about this tournament because it was a bad tournament."

Former Australian Test star Rodney Marsh presided over the opening of the new England cricket academy on Friday and predicted that the English could become the world's leading cricket nation within five years.

"I don't see any reason why that can't happen, no reason at all," said Marsh the former Aussie wicketkeeper who is now director of the academy which is based at Loughborough University in the English Midlands.

The Queen opened the new 4.5-million-pound complex which by 2007 is expected to be producing 95 percent of England's international cricketers.

It has six nets with individual tracks to assist the development of spin, fast and medium-pace bowlers while bowling machines are able to dispatch deliveries at 100 mph.

"I think Australia will find the next 10 years much more difficult than they found the last 10, simply because they will be losing players like Shane Warne."

"Shane is probably the best bowler the world's ever seen and players like that aren't easy to replace. But in England we now have the best facilities in the world and, as a player, there's no better place to be."

"We have the best facilities in front of anywhere else, and it's a great place for the players to come in and work on their game on a daily basis."

"If I can get even one player from each Academy year into the Test side then I count that as success because in 10 years' time at that rate you've got the backbone of the team."

Chanderpaul lbw b Streak 15 Jacobs c Blythe b Price 10 Banks c Vermeulen b Price 16 Dillon not out 27 Collimore b Price 0 Edwards b Blythe 0 Extras: (b-5, lb-3, nb-2, w-4) 14 Total: (All out in 52.4 overs) 128

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-17, 3-21, 4-51, 5-51, 6-82, 7-82, 8-127, 9-127

WEST INDIES: Second innings (over-night 13-1)

Bowler O M R W Streak 15 2 39 3 Blythe 14.4 6 29 3 Price 21 7 36 4 Mahwire 2 0 16 0 ZIMBABWE: Second innings

Sibanda c Lara b Dillon 0 Gripper c Ganga b Banks 8 Vermeulen b Hinds 24 Carlisle not out 1 Extras: 0 Total: (For 3 wks in 12.3 overs) 33

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-32, 3-33

Bowler O M R W Dillon 4 0 13 1 Collimore 6 2 13 0 Ganga c Carlisle b Blythe 8 Hinds 2 0 7 1 Lara b Streak 1 Sarwan c Wishart b Blythe 9

Pakistan chief warns the trio

REUTERS, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has warned captain Inzamamul Haq, coach Javed Miandad and chief selector Aamir Sohail they would be sacked if they continued to violate the board's code of conduct.

The reprimand came after board chairman Tauqir Zia held separate meetings with the trio to resolve a growing feud between them over selection matters.

"The PCB has taken a serious view of the violation by the Pakistan cricket team management and Aamir Sohail. All of them have been reprimanded for their actions," spokesman Samiul Hasan said on Saturday.

The row erupted last week when Sohail announced a provisional 22-man pool of players for the five-match one-day series against New Zealand later in the month without consulting Inzamam or Miandad.

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Beattie raring to glow

Football

AFP, Manchester

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The Southampton striker, who has scored seven times in the Premiership this season, was pleased to be given another chance.

"I'm not bitter -- I'm pleased it's a case of better late than never," said the 25-year-old.

"Of course I'd have liked to have been in the squad from the start -- but I see it as a great opportunity for myself. "Some might say it's a bit of luck --

but you can't turn these things down. I've got to do my job and try and get some credit out of it."

However, his build-up to the game has, like Smith's, been clouded by controversy.

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