

Warne takes to the field today

REUTERS, Colombo

Australia leg-spinner Shane Warne, banned for a year after a positive drugs test, will return to the national side on Tuesday for a warm-up match against a Sri Lanka President's XI.

Warne, 34, missed last year's World Cup after he was suspended for taking a diuretic. He was recalled to the Australia side for their tour of Sri Lanka after one first class match.

"It's good to have him back around us again," captain Ricky Ponting told reporters on Monday. "Everyone understands that it has been a pretty tough 12 months for him.

"He has worked exceptionally hard, looking in great shape and is apparently bowling very well.

"He is one of the all-time greats and if you can slot those kind of guys back into your side then you will have a bit more of an aura when you take the field."

Dev to look after Indian quickies

REUTERS, Calcutta

Former India captain Kapil Dev will accept a new role of coaching his country's fast bowlers starting with a training camp before the national side leave for Pakistan next week.

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Jagmohan Dalmiya said on Monday that Kapil, who took an Indian record 434 Test wickets, would train and monitor fast bowlers in the national team and at the domestic level.

"We had sought Kapil's consent and he is ready," Dalmiya told a news conference.

"We have not thought of any designation as of now, but it would be on a long-term, regular basis."

Anil, Ajit

FROM PAGE 13

security experts at the home ministry in New Delhi on Wednesday morning before departing for Pakistan by a special flight later in the day.

The Indians will play a warm-up match at Lahore on March 11 before the series begins with the first one-day in Karachi on March 13.

The remaining games will be played in Rawalpindi (March 16), Peshawar (March 19) and Lahore (March 21 and 24).

The second match in Rawalpindi and the last two games in Lahore will be day-night internationals.

The Test series, India's first in Pakistan since 1989, will be played at Multan (March 28-April 1), Lahore (April 5-9) and Rawalpindi (April 13-17).

It's more than

FROM PAGE 13

"I think I am a more improved, controlled and focused bowler after that game," said Akhtar, famed for his 100-mpg (160.9 km/h) deliveries.

"Both teams have to prove themselves once again. It will be a high pressure series and I am looking forward to it," Akhtar said.

"I think it would be a case of how our bowling fares against their strong batting. Because while their bowling is inexperienced, our batting is a bit inexperienced," he added.

Chief selector Wasim Bari told Reuters Monday that the selectors had held discussions with team captain Inzamam-ul-Haq and coach Javed Miandad and they had agreed to name the 14-man one-day squad on Friday.



PHOTO:AFP

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan (L) and Samsung's Pakistan country manager Sang Suk Roh display the trophy for the forthcoming India-Pakistan cricket series during a function in Lahore on February 29.

Lara stays skipper

Cricket

AFP, St. John's

The West Indies senior selection panel on Sunday named a 16-man squad to go into training ahead of the first Test against England in Kingston, Jamaica.

The camp, which will be held in Jamaica, starts on Thursday and the squad will be reduced to 13 players by March 8. The first Test starts on Thursday, March 11.

The West Indies Cricket Board has confirmed Brian Lara as captain for both the England and Bangladesh home series.

Injury has kept out Vasbert Drakes and Wavell Hinds, poor form has shut out Daren Ganga and Mervyn Dillon, while Ravi Rampaul, the spearhead of the Young West Indies side that has reached the ICC Youth World Cup Bangladesh 2004, has not been considered.

The West Indies selection panel, under the chairmanship of Vivian Richards, the former West Indies captain and batting superstar, have brought back fast bowler Tino Best, as well as batsmen Devon Smith and Ryan Hinds, included Ricardo Powell, and sprung a surprise with unknown fast bowler Dwight Washington.

West Indies, whose record in Test cricket over the last 10 years has heightened the visitors' expectations, are bullies at home and Michael Vaughan's side, looking to become the first English team to win a Test series in the Caribbean in 36 years, will have their hands full.

Best played his only Test against Australia on a belt at Kensington Oval in his native Barbados last year and did not do justice to his bowling, taking no wickets in an expensive bowl.

Under the guidance of Wayne Daniel, the former West Indies fast

bowler, he returned this year to bowl with pace and accuracy and was the leading bowler in the West Indies first-class championship after the preliminary stages with 35 wickets at 12.60 apiece.

Smith and Hinds, both left-handers, have scored consistently in the first-class championship this season.

Opening batsman Smith, whose batting style has been compared to Roy Fredericks, the late, great West Indies opener, has been the leading batsman in the Championship.

He has struck four hundreds and three half-centuries in a tally 842 runs at 76.54 in seven matches.

Fortunate to have regained his place, Hinds has the fifth highest aggregate of the season. Five times he has passed 50 for the season, in gathering 481 runs at 43.72. His highest score for the season has been 83, but he is a useful all-round cricketer able to bowl steady left-arm spin and field sharply.

Mills to seek rugby star's suggestion

AFP, Napier

New Zealand cricket coach John Bracewell has called in an ex-All Black ace to give a psychological boost to one of New Zealand's struggling cricket bowlers, he said Monday.

New Zealand play South Africa here Tuesday in the sixth and last one-day international in the series which the hosts have already won 4-1.

Bracewell said he had called in ex-All Black Grant Fox to help out Kyle Mills.

"He's going to talk to Grant (Fox) about being in pressure situations. When you've got to nail it, it's the last kick, how do you cope?" said Bracewell.

Mills conceded 25 off the final over against Jacques Kallis and Mark Boucher in Auckland on Sunday as New Zealand clung on by two runs.

It was the second such blowout in the series for Mills after the third match in Wellington when Shaun Pollock whacked 21 off his final over with 27 runs required.

Bracewell sympathised with Mills, who bowled an excellent 27th over worth just four runs which effectively sealed the match in the reduced 29-over chase.

"The damage was done and the game was won before that, and Kyle just chose to entertain us," Bracewell joked.

"He bowled eight terrific balls in a row to nail the game, then slipped and let go a full toss (a no-ball which went for six), he was back into self-doubt.

Bowlers take

FROM PAGE 13 Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday:

Table with columns: BOWLER, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Anderson, Goudie, Lyons, Coetzer, Iqbal, Nazmul, Enamul Jr, Extras, Total, Fall of wickets, and Bowler statistics for Bangladesh.

Table with columns: BOWLER, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Nazmul, Rubaiyat, Abashar, Enamul Jr, Nadif, Extras, Total, Fall of wickets, and Bowler statistics for Scotland.

Result: Bangladesh won by 91 runs. Man-of-the-match: Nazmul Hossain. Toss: Bangladesh.

Captains to be cautioned

Cricket

AFP, Napier

Rival New Zealand and South African cricket skippers will be warned to end their sledging battle, match referee Gundappa Viswanath of India said Monday.

The two sides meet here Tuesday in the sixth and last one-day cricket international match in a series New Zealand have already won 4-1.

New Zealand's Stephen Fleming and South Africa's Graeme Smith Sunday indulged in a prolonged verbal exchange and Brendon McCullum and Jacques Kallis had to be separated after clashing mid-pitch.

Viswanath took no action after umpires Russell Tiffin and Doug Cowie assured him no one took it too far.

However Viswanath said he would speak to both captains before the toss.

"I will remind them what we discussed at the pre-series meeting. Yesterday there were a couple of incidents and I don't want it to get out of hand," Viswanath told reporters.

"I'll just mention it, there's still a lot of cricket left in the series."

New Zealand coach John Bracewell defended Fleming, suggesting he was sticking up for McCullum and Kyle Mills, who has clashed with Smith throughout the series.

"I quite like the way they're not allowing themselves to be bullied, and I like the way their team mates went in there and helped them out," Bracewell said.

"The South Africans learned the trick from the Australians but I don't think they're as good at it.

"We're very aware of it, under pressure with their backs to the wall, people will try those things. The Australians do it by nature, they do it before they've started losing."

South Africa coach Eric Simons said he was disappointed with the Fleming-Smith clash.

"There's needle out there but it wasn't necessary perhaps," Simons said, adding there was no lingering animosity between the sides.

New Zealand released Craig McMillan from the squad to be with his wife for the impending birth of their first child at the weekend.

It means Sunday's man-of-the-

match Chris Harris gets another chance, with paceman Daryl Tuffey the most likely 12th man after suffering what Bracewell termed a corked thigh after sliding on the boundary rope Sunday.

Fleming said he was looking forward to the game.

"We're enjoying our cricket, playing winning cricket and it's another chance to right the ledger against them."

Simons said he would consider resting some key players ahead of the Test series, including pace spearhead Shaun Pollock who was nursing various niggles.

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND (from): Stephen Fleming (captain), Michael Pappas, Hamish Marshall, Scott Styris, Chris Cairns, Jacob Oram, Chris Harris, Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori, Kyle Mills, Daryl Tuffey, Michael Mason.

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Boeta Dippenaar, Jacques Rudolph, Mark Boucher, Shaun Pollock, Lance Klusener, Nicky Boje, Makhaya Ntini, Andre Nel, Albie Morkel, Robin Peterson, Ashwell Prince.

'Don't talk Zimbabwe'

Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Michael Vaughan insisted Sunday there would be no talk of Zimbabwe among his squad while they were in the West Indies.

England are set to play their first tour match, in Jamaica, on Monday as they begin their bid to win a Test series in the Caribbean for the first time since 1968.

However, the question of whether they will tour Zimbabwe later this year remains unresolved.

But the issue will be up for discussion at next month's International Cricket Council (ICC) board meeting in New Zealand.

David Morgan, chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board

(ECB), will argue the case for a postponement of the October tour on political grounds in protest at the regime of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe at a two-day meeting in Auckland on March 9 and 10.

And Vaughan believes it is administrators, rather than his largely inexperienced side, who should have the final say on whether the tour goes ahead as planned.

"The ECB will be making decisions. We have got a young team and there is no way young players should be involved in any decisions revolving around a political situation," Vaughan told BBC Radio 5 Live in an interview.

"Hopefully they will make the decision and we can just concentrate on the cricket. We are trying to get our preparation spot-on for the first Test starting on Thursday week in Jamaica and there will be

no mention of Zimbabwe."

England's World Cup campaign last year was blighted by confusion over whether or not they would play a match in the Zimbabwe capital, Harare.

After months of deliberation, they pulled out on the eve of the match citing security fears.

It was a decision which cost England World Cup points and money and saw them lose friends among the rest of the international cricket community as well as souring relationships between their own players and administrators.

"I think we all agree that in the World Cup last year it wasn't dealt with in a great manner both from the management and players side," said Vaughan. "That is not going to happen again," he insisted.

'I am ready for Test'

Cricket

REUTERS, Colombo

Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds believes he is now ready for Test cricket after a prolific one-day series with bat and ball against Sri Lanka.

Symonds, 28, is tipped to make his Test debut later in the tour after being named Man of the Series for his 211 runs and five wickets during the five-match series, which Australia won 3-2.

"I feel as ready as ever to play Test cricket if selected," he told reporters after picking up his award on Sunday.

"If I was chosen I wouldn't feel underdone or anything and I am ready to accept the challenge if I'm given the chance."

Asked what the secret to his recent success was, he answered: "I just have a good plan working at the moment. The way I have decided to play is coming off for me most of the time."

Symonds, who can bowl off spin and medium pace, is enjoying the opportunity to play on Sri Lanka's slow, turning pitches.

"It is a fact that the ball does turn more here," he said. "The ball is coming out of my hand nicely at the moment and the rhythm is

good."

Adam Gilchrist, skipper for the day after Ricky Ponting was rested, believes Symonds is bowling so well he could even be considered a frontline bowler for the Test series, which begins March 8.

"He is still learning but he will only be more confident after this so it is definitely shaping up as a nice option to have him as a frontline bowler or someone to complement the others," he said.

"He has just been improving and improving and producing great performances during the last few months."

"It has got everyone thinking. Who is going to play in the Tests is anyone's guess at the moment and that is a nice position to be in."

Satkhira cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Aryans Club won their inaugural match in the Satkhira District First Division Cricket League defeating Rasulpur Krira Sangstha by 102 runs at the Satkhira Government College ground yesterday.

Winning the toss, Aryans batted first and scored 235 all out in 44.3 overs.

Series goes

FROM PAGE 13 BANGLADESH: First innings (over-night 88-5)

Table with columns: BOWLER, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Hannan b Ervine, Shahrir c Taibu b Ervine, Bashir c Friend b Streak, Saleh c Ervine b Hondo, Ashraf c Carlisle b Friend, Manjarul c Taibu b Price, Mushfiq lbw b Hondo, Mashud lbw b Ervine, Baisya c Flower b Price, Rafique not out, Kabir c Ebrahim b Price, Extras: (lb-4, nb-13, w-5), Total: (All out in 75.5 overs), Fall of wickets: 1-64, 2-73, 3-73, 4-81, 5-87, 6-89, 7-126, 8-137, 9-144.

Table with columns: BOWLER, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Streak, Hondo, Ervine, Mawshire, Friend, Price, Extras: (nb-3), Total: (For 2 wickets in 60.2 overs), Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-134.

Table with columns: BOWLER, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Baisya, Kabir, Mushfiq, Rafique, Manjarul, Ashraf, Result: Match drawn and Zimbabwe win two-Test series 1-0.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 25 mins and a cryptogram clue.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with a solution key and a clue: Today's Cryptogram Clue: R equals S.

Federer waiting for Safin

Tennis

REUTERS, Dubai

World number one Roger Federer says he is relishing the challenge of facing his Australian Open final opponent Marat Safin again in the first round of the Dubai Open this week as he begins the defence of his title.

"It was a big surprise," Federer said on Sunday.

"But I see it as a very nice chance for both of us to play another good match."

Federer beat the big-serving Safin in straight sets in Melbourne last month to claim his second grand slam title, following the Russian's surprise run to the final after missing most of 2003 with injury.

Former world number one and 2000 US Open champion Safin enters the Dubai tournament as a wildcard.

"It's quite unbelievable to be playing a grand slam final in the first round," said Federer.

"It makes me prepare even better and focus more because I know how dangerous and what a good player he is."

"It's one of my most difficult first rounds. I remember once I

played Hewitt in Toronto in the first round, but we were both ranked around 20 or 30.

"So I think this is one of the toughest because I'm number one in the world and he's number two in the Champions Race. We're both right on top, so this is quite special."

Federer pulled out of the Marseille Open last week after complaining of fatigue and shoulder and foot injuries, but says he is now anxious to get back on to court.

"I feel better now," he said. "I really needed a break because I felt like my body was hurting a lot."

While some players complain of the pressure associated with being number one, 22-year-old Federer takes the opposite view.

"I feel now that I've reached the top that I'm much more relaxed. I know what I can do and what I have to do to win."

Federer is still looking for a coach, but the confidence he has in himself means that he is not desperate for guidance.

"I'm not planning to travel with one the next few weeks," he said. "And I have nothing in mind or planned yet."

a lot of areas of my game, even though I am the best right now.

Hrbaty's third

AFP, Marseille

Slovak Dominik Hrbaty jumped to third place in the ATP Champions Race after claiming his third title in five events this season when he rallied from a set down to defeat Swedish teen Robin Soderling here on Sunday.

Hrbaty, who had not won a title for three years before winning back-to-back titles in Adelaide and Auckland at the beginning of the season, came away 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 winner against the 19-year-old from Gothenberg, who was competing in his first ATP final.

Hrbaty, who finished last year's Champions Race in 57th position, eliminated last year's finalist Jonas Bjorkman in the semi-finals, on his way to claiming the sixth title of his career.

The 26-year-old Monte Carlo-based Slovak broke his Swedish opponent opportunely at 5-4 in the final two sets, calling in the doctor for court-side assistance for an unspecified ailment in the final set while leading 5-1.