

India to play in Holland tri-series

CRICINFO, undated

The Indian board has announced that it will participate in a three-nation warm-up tournament with Australia and Pakistan in the Netherlands in August ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy in England in September.

India were due to play two Tests and three ODIs in Bangladesh in August, but these have now been indefinitely postponed.

Announcing the decision, SK Nair, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said on Tuesday that he hoped that the series could be rearranged for 2005.

"The board was very keen to send a full-strength team to Bangladesh but have decided against it as we don't want our cricketers to suffer burnout before an important four-match Test series against Australia in September," Nair explained.

"Our cricketers will get hardly a month's break after the Pakistan tour. Major tournaments this year include the Asia Cup in June-July, the tri-nation tournament in Amsterdam from August 22-27, followed by three one-day matches in England before the Champions Trophy."

He added that South Africa are likely to tour India to play seven one-day matches in November this year.

"If the South African board agrees then we will invite them for a Test series in the beginning of next year."

Navratilova loses comeback match

AFP, Amelia Island

Tennis legend Martina Navratilova's appearance in her first United States singles tournament since 1994 came to a quick end.

The 47-year-old American lost to Venezuelan lucky loser Milagros Sequera 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 here on Tuesday in the first round of a \$85,000-dollar WTA Tour clay-court event, the season's first French Open tuneup.

Navratilova's doubles comeback is now into its fifth season, but she accepted a singles wild card this week here to help her in her doubles play. She and partner Lisa Raymond seek a berth in the Athens Olympics.

This was her first singles appearance since playing at Eastbourne in 2002 after retiring at the 1994 season-ending WTA Tour Championships.

A three-time winner of this event, Navratilova plans to play next week at Charleston, South Carolina, and again in June at Eastbourne.

World number one Justine Henin-Hardenne of Belgium, who skipped Serena Williams' comeback event the previous two weeks at Key Biscayne, Florida, returned with a 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) second-round victory over Russian Dinara Safina.

Henin-Hardenne won her fourth title of the year last month at Indian Wells.

Ponting best

FROM PAGE 13

double hundreds in a single year and led Australia's one-day side to victory in the World Cup in South Africa.

Ponting, named as Australia's player of the year in February, is the first recipient of the new award.

England's Andrew Flintoff, South Africa's Graeme Smith and Gary Kirsten, Australian Ian Harvey and Sussex captain Chris Adams were named as Wisden's five cricketers of the year, chosen on the basis of the players' "influence on the English season".

Streak skips match

Cricket

REUTERS, Durban

Pace bowler Heath Streak said on Wednesday he would not play a domestic first-class match this weekend and would continue talks with the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) in a bid to clear up his playing status.

The ZCU said at the weekend that former captain Streak would quit all cricket on Monday.

He was then named on Tuesday in the Matabeleland team for a match against Manic in Mutema starting on Friday.

However, Streak told this news agency from Harare that he would not play in the match.

"I won't be playing this weekend, even though I made myself available for the match and I was picked," Streak said.

"But the acting convenor of national selectors, Max Ebrahim, made a statement to the press that I wasn't available for selection, based on the decisions the board made."

"I haven't withdrawn from the team but I'm abiding by their decisions."

Streak said his meeting with ZCU managing director Vince Hog that have been ongoing since Tuesday would continue on Thursday.

Streak sought the meeting in the wake of a ZCU board meeting that led to his alleged resignation over his dissatisfaction with the composition of the national selection committee.

Streak's father, Denis, denied his son had resigned.

"Heath at no time tendered or threatened to tender his resignation as captain, or as a national player as alleged by the ZCU," Dennis Streak said in a media statement.

"All he said was that if his concerns were not addressed he would consider possible retirement from international cricket."



HEATH STREAK S

Bevan England-bound?

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Discarded Australian one-day international cricketer Michael Bevan may be off to play in England after his shock failure to receive a Cricket Australia contract.

The international career of the prolific-scoring 33-year-old Bevan looked finished on Tuesday when he was left off the list of Cricket Australia (CA) contracted players for 2004-05.

Bevan's manager Robert Joske said he would meet his client on Thursday to discuss their options and hope to have some positive news early next week.

Joske said he would look at all options for Bevan but expected a England county stint would be high on the priority list and he would be keen to

talk to any interested county.

Bevan has enjoyed productive playing stints with Yorkshire (1995-96), Sussex (1998-2000) and Leicestershire (2002).

While virtually all the counties have finalised their two import spots for the season starting later this month, most have also signed back-up players in case their first choices are required for international duty during the season which runs until September.

While few opportunities for a full season stint would appear available to Bevan, he could end up deputising for one of many compatriots who might be required for international duty against Zimbabwe in May or Sri Lanka the following month.

Among the CA contracted players attached to counties this season are Shane Warne and Michael Clarke (Hampshire), Andrew Symonds (Kent), Michael Kasprowitz and

Matthew Elliott (Glamorgan), Damien Martin and Stuart MacGill (Nottinghamshire), Darren Lehmann and Ian Harvey (Yorkshire) and Brad Hodge (Leicestershire).

Joske said he recognised Bevan might have to settle for a stint as a replacement.

"At this late stage, beggars can't be choosers, but we were already looking at a short term stint for him on the basis that he would be playing for Australia," Joske said Wednesday.

"I'm keen now to continue looking at that and also to find out if there is any opportunity for a full term stint."

"We will meet tomorrow and discuss the various options available for him and what he wants for his career and his family."

Bacher wishes WI well

Cricket

REUTERS, Barbados

Ali Bacher has said he is confident the West Indies can stage a successful World Cup in 2007 despite fears that their infrastructure is not good enough to hold the sport's biggest event.

Security worries, under-developed stadia and a lack of planning have led many to suggest that the region will not be suitably equipped to cope with the World Cup's demands.

Bacher, speaking in Barbados on Tuesday, said he believed it would be a success.

"I am confident that there is plenty of time to get things into place," Bacher told Barbados television station CBC.

Having served as managing director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa and as executive director of the 2003 World Cup, Bacher knows what it takes to stage the sports biggest event.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity - don't throw it away," Bacher warned. "You've got to invest in

improving the stadia, as if you don't do it now you never will."

Many of the West Indies grounds need updating, while the cities will have to cope with an estimated 100,000 fans arriving to support the 16 teams involved.

The allocation of tickets during the Test series against England was also an issue, with more tickets sold to visitors than home supporters.



ALI BACHER

"I understand that there is a process underway to plan everything," Bacher said. "You have some wonderful attributes here - wonderful people, great islands and with a chance to expand cricket."

Bacher said safety would be one of the toughest challenges facing the event's organisers.

"I think security will be the big issue," he said. "We live in a world of increasing terrorism and you have to be very conservative and make sure everything is right."

While stressing the problems, Bacher also emphasised the opportunity that staging an event like the World Cup can bring to a region.

"At the 2003 World Cup, 1.5 billion people around the world watched South Africa at the opening ceremony and the same thing will happen in 2007."

"You have a great tourist industry here and a great opportunity to make it a success."

Davis Cup US face Sweden in qtrs

Tennis

AFP, Delray Beach

Hoping to win the Davis Cup for the first time since 1995, a confident United States to play hosts Sweden in a quarterfinal tie starting here Friday.

World number two Andy Roddick, who won an ATP crown Sunday at Key Biscayne, is joined

by 18th-ranked Mardy Fish and the top-rated doubles team of brothers Mike and Bob Bryan on US captain Patrick McEnroe's squad.

"We have the number one doubles team in the world, the number two singles player, and another top 20 player, plus we are playing at home," McEnroe said. "By no means is it a lock. But if we play well, we'll be OK. I think we have a very good chance."

Roddick was inspired to play

Davis Cup at age 12 when he attended the 1992 Davis Cup final between the US and Switzerland at Fort Worth, Texas. Now that he is a top player, Roddick is determined to bring the Davis Cup back home.

"It's a huge goal of mine, to help our team win Davis Cup," Roddick said. "I mean, I've been a fan ever since I went to a tie when I was younger. So, you know, it's definitely a priority in my tennis life, that's for sure."

The Swedish lineup features 27th-ranked Jonas Bjorkman, number 49 Robin Soderling and veterans Thomas Enqvist and Thomas Johansson, the 2002 Australian Open champion who was sidelined by injured throughout last year.

The Swedes trail the United States 7-3 in Davis Cup meetings, but won 5-0 against a US team that included Pete Sampras and Michael Chang the last time they met, in the 1997 Cup finals at Gothenburg.

Captained by former Swedish great Mats Wilander, the Swedes are hopeful they can move into the semi-final against either Argentina or Belarus. They upset 2003 champion Australia in the first round at Adelaide in February.

"It's a very, very even match," said Wilander, who picked up seven Grand Slam titles during his career. "We always feel we're going to win in Davis Cup, it doesn't matter where or against who. We're playing against one of the better players in the world and I don't think it scares us that much."

Bjorkman, noted as one of the world's best doubles players with four Grand Slam trophies amongst his 34 doubles titles, will definitely play doubles and possibly singles.

Steve settles in new lifestyle

AFP, Sydney

Steve Waugh is enjoying his life away from cricket and even doesn't mind if he's not allowed to watch the sport on television.

Waugh, 38, ended a fabulous 18-year Test career three months ago as cricket's most successful captain.

The most influential cricketer of his generation finished with a number of towering achievements. He was the second-highest Test run scorer, the second-greatest century-maker along with being the most successful captain.

"As a cricketer you do get spoiled," Waugh told a business lunch here on Wednesday. "It's great while it lasts but you don't want to stay in that sort of lifestyle for too long."

"You're back to reality with three kids because you've got to do the hard work and the little things."

"You've got to change nappies and get them breakfast in the morning and do the normal stuff, which I really enjoy."

"It's great to be back in that environment and that lifestyle."

Waugh is relishing the chance to read stories to his kids, drive his seven-year-old daughter Rosie to school and ballet, take his four-year-old son Austin to the golf range and play with his two-year-old Lily.

"As a cricketer you go on tour and it's all about yourself."

"You can order room service every night if you want, throw your clothes on the ground and pay for someone to do the laundry."

"You really are looked after and it's a different world."

Waugh even had a battle watching Australia's recent Test series win over Sri Lanka, the first since he retired and handed the captaincy over to Ricky Ponting.

Every time he flicked the channel over his wife Lynette would say: "Get that bloody cricket off."

"I can understand that after 20-odd years of watching nearly every day of her life," said Waugh, "it's probably not top of her list."

Indian players

FROM PAGE 13

here and the appeal by the cricketers for help had been published in Indian newspapers two days ago.

"We have already been approached by the Christian Medical College in Vellore, Manipal hospital in Bangalore and the Tata memorial hospital in Bombay to provide free treatment," team manager Ratnakar Shetty said.

"The request has been forwarded to the girl's father and we have been assured by the Indian High Commission in Pakistan that it will make the necessary travel arrangements."

The girl's father said he could not thank the Indian cricketers enough for their gesture.

"I was quite desperate for help because the girl was dying," Chhina said. "I was told the necessary treatment was available in India, so I approached the team for help."

"They immediately agreed to make an appeal. I will always be grateful to them. God bless them."

The Indian team, on its first full tour of Pakistan since 1989, had been advised by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee before departure last month to "win both matches and the hearts of the people."

Singer chess

FROM PAGE 13

It's an open event for less than 20 years old boys and girls and no entry fee requires. Interested boys and girls can enroll their names on or before April 13 at Bangladesh Chess Federation office.

Ganguly to rejoin

FROM PAGE 13

Gul b Tendulkar 14 Kaneria not out 0 Extras: (b-4, lb-18, nb-16, w-4) 42 Total: (All out in 160.1 overs) 489

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Pathan, Balaji, Agarkar, Kumble, Tendulkar, Yuvraj, Sehwaq.

INDIA: Second innings Chopra lbw b Akhtar 5 Sehwaq not out 86 Dravid run out 0 Tendulkar lbw b Sami 8 Laxman b Gul 13 Yuvaraj c Akmal b Sami 12 Patel not out 13 Extras: (lb-7, nb-4, w-1) 12 Total: (For 5 wks in 40 overs) 149

Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-15, 3-43, 4-88, 5-105 To bat: Pathan, Agarkar, Kumble, Balaji

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lists bowlers like Akhtar, Sami, Gul, Kaneria.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes solution time: 21 mins.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers. Includes solution: Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WIJEN YOUR WORK SUPERVISOR IS A HARD TASKMASTER, I SUPPOSE YOU'VE BEEN EM-BOSSSED.