

England's Law option

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, London

England's chairman of selectors David Granevey has not ruled out considering Stuart Law as a Test batsman.

The Australian has expressed an interest in playing for England once he has been granted British citizenship.

The 36-year-old averages 51 in the first-class game and was the leading run-scorer last season. Granevey told BBC Sport: "I was at Hove on Thursday and saw Law bat against Sussex and there is no doubt he is an exceptional player. But he is 36."

Law, in his second season at Lancashire, expects to become a British national by the end of the year.

Granevey added: "He will not qualify to play for England until at least next year so it would be wrong

for me to comment on it now.

"He is a fantastic player and a great asset to Lancashire so we will just have to wait and see what happens at the end of the season."



STUART LAW

"We deal in runs and wickets and he is doing nothing wrong in that respect."

Law believes his chances of an England call are slim on the grounds

of age, but weighed against that is his phenomenal batting record.

"If the opportunity arose, it is a chance to play Test cricket," he said. "I am not counting any chickens. It is not that I don't want to play, but I think it would be ridiculous for a 36-year-old to play ahead of some good young players coming through."

His only previous experience of Test cricket came in December 1995 when he made an unbeaten 54 as Australia beat Sri Lanka by an innings and 36 runs in Perth.

Law also played 54 one-day internationals, the last of them in 1999, but retired from Australian cricket at the end of the 2003-04 season having been named Queensland-player-of-the-year.

If given a chance by England, it could come against Australia in next summer's Ashes series.

"I could play against a few of my best mates -- that would be interesting," he added.

Magura cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Rawtara Cricket Ekadash defeated Abul Hossain Khan Smriti Sangsad by five runs in the last match of the first round of a cricket tournament at the Magura Stadium yesterday.

Winning the toss, Rawtara Sporting batted first and scored 126 all out in the stipulated 25 overs.

In reply, Abul Hossain Khan Smriti Sangsad were all out for 121 in 21 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
RAWTARA SPORTING CLUB: 126 all out in 25 overs (Sankhin 34, Nimai 29, Shankar 17; Rubel (1) 3/18, Rubel (2) 2/28, Arif 2/25).

ABUL HOSSAIN KHAN SMRITI SANGSAD: 121 all out in 21 overs (Arif 4, Rubel (2) 16, Rabbi 10; Shubol 3/9, Monirul 2/23, Nimai 2/18).

Man-of-the match: Monirul of Rawtara Cricket Ekadash.

Bashundhara

FROM PAGE 13
Result: Bashundhara won by four wickets.

BADC vs GrameenPhone
Venue: Fatullah Stadium
BADC: 74-5 in 27 overs (Arman 17 not out, Asif 14, Ismail 14, Rashedul 10, extras 6, Mahmud 2-10, Monjurul 1-14, Munir 1-24, Razzak 1-11)

GrameenPhone: 94-1 in 18.5 overs (Shahriar 46 not out, Anisul 35, extras 11, Ismail 1-15).

Result: GrameenPhone won by nine wickets.

Shoab served

FROM PAGE 13
The board had formed a four-member medical commission headed by an orthopaedic surgeon.

"Akhtar pretended injury and let the whole nation down and then rubbed salt on the wounds with his off-field actions," the lawyer alleged.

Akhtar, who will feature for Durham county in the English season from next week, has denied faking injury.

Will the King

FROM PAGE 13
into the side," said Anderson.

TEAMS

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ramnaresh Sarwan (vice-captain), Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chandepaul, Ricardo Powell, Dwayne Smith, Ryan Hinds, Sylvester Joseph, Ridley Jacobs, Dwayne Bravo, Ian Bradshaw, Mervyn Dillon, Ravi Rampaul, Corey Collymore

ENGLAND (from): Michael Vaughan (captain), James Anderson, Gareth Batty, Ian Blackwell, Rikki Clarke, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Stephen Harmison, James Kirtley, Anthony McGrath, Chris Read, Andrew Strauss, Marcus Trescothick

Primera Liga preview

Ronaldo a concern

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo is a serious doubt for Sunday's Primera Liga clash against arch-rivals Barcelona after he pulled up in training on Friday because of pain in his left thigh.

The Brazilian international was thought to be on course to re-appear in the match at the Bernabeu after spending two weeks on the sidelines because of a thigh strain sustained during the 3-0 defeat against Osasuna.

But he was forced to stop training and was examined by club medical staff after feeling pain in his leg as he kicked the ball towards the end of the session.

The club said there was a serious doubt about him playing on Sunday but no decision would be made until the morning of the game.

Ronaldo suffered a similar injury to the same leg last month and was unable to play in the final of the King's Cup against Real Zaragoza, a game Real went on to lose 3-2 in extra time.

Real play host to Barcelona with, as usual, a huge amount at stake in one of the bitterest derby matches in the world of club football.

Both teams desperately want to win, at the very least to keep their super-critical fans happy, but there is much more at stake than just pride.

Real lie second in the table with 70 points from 33 games, and five still to go, and are only behind league leaders Valencia on goal difference.

However, a draw or worse against Barca, who have not won in the Santiago Bernabeu since 1997, would hand Valencia, the UEFA Cup semi-finalists and 2001-2002 champions, the advantage in the race for the title.

The job of Real coach Carlos Queiroz is also on the line after the reigning Spanish champions' recent series of setbacks, which have included losing the Spanish Cup final, losing 3-0 at home to Osasuna and going out of the Champions

League at the quarter-final stage.

"Each game has become Real Madrid against the rest of the world," said Queiroz on Thursday, acknowledging his critics and the mounting pressure.

"But at least this has had the affect of bringing the team together and concentrating the mind," added the Portuguese coach.

By contrast, his opposite number Frank Rijkaard is a relatively happy man.

In December, when Real went to

this season without a trophy, he has built a Barca side capable of returning to its former heights after several barren seasons.

Queiroz will have to fill a gap in the centre of the defence owing to the suspension of Francisco Pavon.

Queiroz is expected to put Ivan Helguera alongside his fellow Spanish international Raul Bravo in the middle of the back four and recall Jose Maria Gutierrez to accompany England captain David Beckham in midfield.

Rijkaard's main injury worry concerns Carlos Puyol. The Spanish international defender will have a late fitness test on his strained left hamstring.

The match will also see the derby debut of Ronaldinho. The Brazilian missed the first encounter this season due to an injury.

Almost ignored in the frenzy over the derby, league leaders Valencia travel to fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

Valencia coach Rafa Benitez will be waiting to see the effects of Thursday's UEFA Cup semi-final stalemate against Villarreal before naming a team but he will probably resist adopting his usual policy of rotating his squad.

"Winning the league still remains in our hands so it is our job to make sure it doesn't slip through our fingers," said Benitez earlier this week.

However, Athletic will not be too accommodating as they are still chasing a place in next season's UEFA Cup.



RONALDO

the Nou Camp and notched up their first win there in 20 years with a 2-1 win, the Barca fans were calling for the Dutchman's head.

Now, after a 15-match unbeaten streak, Barca have risen to third although they are still seven points behind the leading pair.

"I think we have demonstrated to the world that in our current form we can win in Madrid. Madrid is fighting for the title but we have not given up yet either," Rijkaard said on Thursday.

"We didn't win games at the start of the season when our squad was thrown out of its rhythm by the demands of various national teams but we now have high hopes of success and these should continue," added Rijkaard.

Rijkaard's words were a clear warning that although they may end

Rivaldo coming to Bolton?

GUARDIAN, London

Rivaldo's agent Peter Harrison is hopeful that the former world player of the year will be a Bolton player within the next 48 hours.

Bolton boss Sam Allardyce has already persuaded the likes of Youri Djorkaeff, Jay-Jay Okocha and Ivan Campo to sign for him but Rivaldo's capture would be his biggest transfer coup should a deal be clinched.

Harrison appears confident that the former AC Milan and Barcelona playmaker can be persuaded to add Bolton to his list of clubs.

He told BBC Radio 5 Live: "We are still in negotiations but, hopefully, he will be a Bolton player in the next 48 hours. He would be looking to sign a two-year contract."

Harrison added in an interview



RIVALDO

with Sky Sports News: "We're still negotiating but if I was a betting man I'd say he's going to be a Bolton Wanderers player."

"Why shouldn't he sign for Bolton - Sam Allardyce is a great manager. Rivaldo has expressed an interest in playing in the Premiership and has come over to meet with Sam and see if we progress the deal."

"A few other clubs have expressed an interest in signing him but we haven't spoken to anyone else."

Despite the fact he has been out of competitive football since quitting Brazilian club Cruzeiro in February, Harrison says Rivaldo, who celebrated his 32nd birthday on Monday, is in prime condition.

"He's very fit. He's lean and is naturally in good condition and if he had to play tomorrow he would be fit enough."

Big Sam's knack for picking up quality players despite financial constraints has been instrumental in seeing his side progress from relegation battlers to a consistent mid-table side this season and Trotters fans will see this as another shrewd acquisition.

Wanderers held discussions with the Brazilian in Manchester on Thursday, a year after a failed bid to bring the free agent to the north-west.

Rivaldo joined Barcelona from Spanish rivals Deportivo La Coruna for £16 million in 1997.

The following year he was named in the Fifa All-Star team at the World Cup finals and won the Primera Liga, Copa del Rey and European Super Cup with Barca.

In 1999 he was named world and European footballer of the year after helping Barca win the Spanish league.

Goalless all around

UEFA CUP

AFP, VILLAREAL, Spain

Valencia coach Rafa Benitez lamented his side's inability to apply the clinical finish as the Spanish giants were held to a goalless draw by the less illustrious Villarreal in their UEFA Cup semi-final first leg here on Thursday.

Villarreal kept alive their streak of keeping a clean sheet in every home game in this season's competition but couldn't find the net either although Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson typified their spirit by playing on despite a gashed head.

Valencia had the best of the chances going forward, and went close several times in the second half, but Villarreal keeper Jose Manuel Reina kept alive his side's hopes of a dream trip to the final in Gothenburg on May 19.

"It's a pain. We had a lot of chances but we couldn't finish them off," said Benitez.

"Now we need to win the second leg, and knowing how tough Villarreal are, it hardly makes us the favourites. Hopefully the support we will get from our fans will make the difference."

The winners of the derby, the first all-Spanish meeting at this stage of the competition for 40 years, will face either Newcastle United or Marseille who also drew 0-0 earlier on Thursday at St. James' Park.

Newcastle's bid to reach their first European final in 35 years was left in the balance as Marseille held out to take a draw back to France for the second leg.

"Both sides had chances, especially in the first half," Newcastle captain Alan Shearer told ITV Sport. "It was a very, very even game."

"But the first priority for us was not to concede a goal and we've done that."

Family to protect

FROM PAGE 13
"But he is often badly advised and keeps bad company."

Boca Juniors beat Bolivian side Bolivar 3-0 in Buenos Aires late Wednesday in the Libertadores Cup and throughout the match, the 30,000 fans sang songs in honour of the Argentine idol and the players carried a banner onto the field saying: "Courage Diego."

Eyewash

FROM PAGE 13
found guilty of any wrongdoing then they bear the consequences," the BFF deputy general secretary opined.

Replying to a question, Malu said members of the media that covered the Games would also be invited to give their versions.

"We have been given seven days to complete the investigation but I think it will take at least 10-12 days."

"I hope that the BFF will implement our suggestions and make the findings public."

However, many think that the whole exercise is simply a waste of time as the BFF was well aware of what was going to happen in Pakistan with such an under-prepared team.

WHIZZ KID-210

correct answers

1. How many gold medals did Bangladesh win in the recently concluded SAF Games?
Ans: 3

2. Who is the coach of Chelsea?
Ans: Rianieri

3. What is the title of the official Euro 2004 song?
Ans: Forza

4. Who clinched the WTA Key Biscayne title?
Ans: Serena

5. What was the score of the India-Pakistan one-day series?
Ans: 3-2

WHIZZ KID-209

winner



Md Mir Kashem (Oxford Int'l School, Dhaka)

Kallis SA's best

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Jacques Kallis was the big winner at the inaugural South African Cricket Awards on Thursday night, as he collected four trophies including the prestigious Mutual South African-cricketer-of-the-year award.

Kallis's peers also recognised his achievements this year, in which he scored 1354 runs in 12 Tests, including five centuries in consecutive matches against West Indies and New Zealand. He also received the players'-player-award, as well as the SuperSport fans' award, and the Castle Lager/MTN player-of-the-year.

"Jacques is without doubt one of our finest-ever cricketers," said Gerald Majola, the chief executive of the United Cricket Board.

"His performances in the last year have been phenomenal and put him among the game's current greats. These awards show not only what a fine year he has had, but also how well-respected he is by his fellow players and by our loyal fans. We should all be very proud of him, he is a great ambassador for our game and South Africa."

Among the other notable award-winners were Jacques Rudolph, the international-newcomer-of-the-year; Makhaya Ntini, the Standard Bank ODI cricketer-of-the-year; and Adam Bacher, a double winner in domestic cricket.

"I congratulate all the winners on their fantastic achievements," added Majola.

"They all richly deserve the accolades and praise for the hard work and dedication they have put in to reach the top in their respective fields of expertise."

"The last year has been one of

great challenges for all of us in cricket," he continued.

"There has also been tremendous growth in the game around the country and these winners reflect that. They have pushed themselves to reach the top and succeeded and we look forward to further



JACQUES KALLIS

growth and even greater achievements over the next twelve months. The UCB is very proud of these young South Africans."

Two lifetime achievement awards were also handed out. South Africa's most-capped Test player, Gary Kirsten, was honoured for his achievements and contributions to the game over the last ten years, along with the previous South African team manager, Goolam Rajah, who received the UCB president's award in recognition of his service over the past decade.

Safin sails, Henman fails

Tennis

AFP, Monaco

Former world number one Marat Safin continued his impressive return from an injury-plagued 2003 by beating Spain's Alberto Martin for the sixth time in six meetings to reach the semifinals of the Monte Carlo Masters here on Friday.

The 24-year-old Russian won 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in 1hr 46min and now faces either third seeded Argentinian Guillermo Coria or seventh seed David Nalbandian,

also of Argentina, for a place in Sunday's final.

British sixth seed Tim Henman saw his hopes of making the semifinals here for the second time in his career ruthlessly crushed by German fourth seed Rainer Schuettler whose 6-3, 6-1 took just 62 minutes.

Schuettler now faces 1998 winner and former French Open champion Carlos Moya in the semi-final.

Moya, the Spanish fifth seed, defeated Russian Nikolay Davydenko 6-4, 7-6 in a gruelling 1hr 43min.

Henman looked a spent force having been pushed to three sets in his other three matches here while also partnering close friend Nenad Zimonjic to the semifinals of the doubles.

He was broken in the fourth game of the first set and lost serve again in the first and fifth games of the second as Schuettler, who had only won two matches on the tour this year before this week, secured a simple victory with a backhand which sailed past a labouring Henman.

Australian Open runner-up Safin's all-court game had Martin thoroughly bewildered in the opening set with the Russian breaking in the sixth game to eventually take the set 6-3 after 36 minutes when the Spaniard netted a backhand off a second serve. Safin broke again to lead 1-0 in the second set before his game unravelled. Back came Martin with breaks in the second and fourth game as he went on to level the match, helped by a lacklustre Safin sending down 13 unforced errors.

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Doosra

FROM PAGE 13
spins away from a right-handed batsman, the opposite of an orthodox off-break.

And the ICC has already confirmed it would not relax the five-degree 'level of tolerance' for a spin bowler's arm.

They are, however, conducting research into the actions of spin bowlers.

"If, as yet to be determined point in the future and as a result of a proper research program, there is evidence to support a change to these regulations, then such a change will be considered," chief executive Malcolm Speed commented.

Muralitharan was born with a bent arm and a previous investigation by Professor Elliott's team his action gave an 'optical illusion' of throwing.

The 'doosra' delivery is, however, a variation he introduced during the home series against England last year.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Attics
6 Kegler's hope
12 Henchman
13 Eucalyptus eaters
14 Involve
15 Tennyson's "of the King"
16 Night light
17 Facto
18 lead-in
19 "Holy cow!"
20 — rug (dance)
22 Seek
24 Tramp
27 Comes together
29 Unscort-ed
32 Muffet's problem
35 Venus de —

DOWN

1 Kent
2 Sgt.
3 Snorkel's dog
4 Belgian coin, pre-euro
5 Division
6 Oaf
7 "This is awful!"
8 Gls' entertainers
9 Highlander's
10 Yew
11 Existence (Lat.)
12 Yew
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15 Snorkel's dog
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