

Miandad stays Pakistan coach

CRICINFO, undated

After days of post-mortems and lots of speculation, the Pakistan Cricket Board has on Wednesday decided to continue with Javed Miandad as the coach of the team.

Shaharyar Khan, the PCB chairman, said that the board did not want to set a bad precedence by sacking the coach every time the team lost.

He insisted that there was no necessity to panic over just one series loss.

English daily The News quoted Shaharyar as saying, "Miandad will continue to be the coach of the national team till the expiry of his contract, that is the start of the next year. It would not be just to judge the coach on the result of just one series. Nobody can blame the coach alone for the series defeat against India."

He also confirmed that the captains would be appointed on a series-to-series basis henceforth instead of the current fixed-term system.

"We announced Inzamamul Haq as captain of the Pakistan team till the Asia Cup. The trend will now change to announcing the captain on a series-to-series basis," Shaharyar, however, clarified that the coach would continue to work for fixed terms.

Australia get in batting practice

AFP, Harare

Australia's batsmen got in some useful practice in a two-day match against Zimbabwe "A" at the Harare Cricket Academy here Tuesday.

In reply to the home team's first innings of 151 all out, Australia were 446-9 in reply when the two captains decided in mid-afternoon to call off the match.

The Australian batsmen who scored sizeable innings were Justin Langer with 84, Ricky Ponting 87, Matthew Hayden 64, Damien Martyn 49, Simon Katich 48 and Adam Gilchrist 36.

It was not so much a match as a batting practice session for the Australians to help get acclimatised to local conditions. Wednesday they will have the day off.

BRIEF SCORES

ZIMBABWE A: 151 (V Sibanda 48, J Gillespie 4-25)

AUSTRALIA: 446-9 declared (J Langer 84, R Ponting 87, M Hayden 64, D Martyn 49, S Katich 48, A Gilchrist 36)

Henin to defend French Open title

AFP, Beersel

Justine Henin-Hardenne, who has not played for six weeks, said Tuesday she would defend her French Open title at the season's second Grand Slam tournament which starts at Roland Garros next Monday.

Henin-Hardenne, who has been battling a virus similar to glandular fever, won her third Grand Slam title in a year at the Australian Open in January, but has played just one clay court tournament this season at Amelia Island in Florida where she lost in the semi-finals.

Leonine chess

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On the other hand GM Sandipan Chanda, IM Lanka Ravi and IM Dinesh Kumar Sharma of India and IM Abdullah Al Rakib won their respective matches.

In the first round, Sandipan beat GM Alexander Fominyh of Russia, Lanka beat IM Reefat-bin-Sattar, Dinesh beat Krishna Thapa of Nepal and Rakib beat Abdul Maleq.

Lanka PM seeks Asian aid



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's prime minister Wednesday vowed to drum up South Asian support and sue the International Cricket Council (ICC) over a decision to outlaw Muttiah Muralitharan's controversial 'doosra' delivery.

Premier Mahinda Rajapakse said he would meet envoys of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to seek support for Sri Lanka's defence of the star off-spinner, who has been described as a "chucker" by Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

He brushed aside ICC chief Ehsan Mani's advice to both prime ministers to stay out of the Muralitharan row and allow the ICC to deal with the situation.

Howard remarked Friday he believed Muralitharan was a chucker, prompting the world record-smashing spinner to consider boycotting Sri Lanka's tour of Australia in July.

Rajapakse then reacted to Howard's remarks by announcing his intention to sue the ICC, but Mani said he had no concerns over the ICC's banning of Muralitharan's 'doosra', a delivery that spins away from the right-handers.

"I don't know the basis of how we'd be sued, but all our regulations are fully supported by all our members," Mani said, referring to the fact that the Sri Lanka Cricket is part of the ICC.

Rajapakse told reporters he would also be consulting lawyers Thursday on action to be initiated against the ICC.

"What we are doing is not politics," Rajapakse said.

"It is my duty to protect one of our national treasures. Muralitharan is not only the pride of Sri Lanka, but the entire region."

Rajapakse said Muralitharan, the most successful bowler in Test history with 527 wickets, was a national asset and he would do everything within his power and that of the government to defend the bowler.

Muralitharan, whose unorthodox action has seen him being no-balled for 'throwing' in the past, came under fresh scrutiny because of the 'doosra'.

The bowler was told last week that if he persisted with it he could face a year-long ban.

Muralitharan was sent to Australia to work on his action after he was

forwarded to him by Sri Lanka Cricket but compiled by the University of Western Australia, meant the 'doosra' could no longer be tolerated.

"The report forwarded by Sri Lanka Cricket proves that the degree of straightening is well outside the ICC's specified levels of tolerance," he said.

"In light of this finding, Sri Lanka Cricket has now advised the ICC that it has instructed Muralitharan not to bowl this delivery in international cricket. The ICC supports this action."

The report showed an initial



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse (L) speaks to reporters in Colombo yesterday in a bid to drum up support from South Asian cricketers in favour of Muttiah Muralitharan.

reported by English match-referee Chris Broad following the third and final Test against Australia at Colombo in March.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed had already said the report,

straightening of the arm by 14 degrees which after remedial work was reduced to 10 degrees, still five degrees more than the level of tolerance for spinners.

Busy Aussie year-end



AFP, Melbourne

New Zealand, Pakistan and the West Indies will tour Australia next southern summer in a compressed three-month programme of one-day and Test cricket matches. Cricket Australia (CA) said on Wednesday.

A new series of three ODIs between Australia and New Zealand for the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy will be added to the programme, CA said.

Australia will play two Tests against New Zealand in Brisbane and Adelaide in November before taking on Pakistan in a three-Test series in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney in December and January.

A compacted ODI tri-series between Australia, Pakistan and the West Indies will be staged in January and February.

The tri-series will feature nine preliminary matches rather than the normal 12, which has been regarded as too many by touring teams in the past.

The Chappell-Hadlee Trophy, which is planned to become an annual competition, will be launched in December with three games in Australia.

They will be played in Melbourne on December 5, Sydney on December 8 and in Brisbane on December 10. There will be three matches in New Zealand the following southern summer.

CA chief executive James Sutherland said the programme had been compressed to cater for other international commitments but a three-Test schedule against New Zealand would return.

"It's certainly far from ideal, we'd

much prefer to be playing three (Tests) but just the nature of the programme for this particular summer has meant that it's been squeezed," Sutherland told reporters here.

"We've made it absolutely clear to New Zealand Cricket that our intention into the future is for it to continue to be at least a three Test match series."

"It relates to the ICC Champions Trophy being held in late September and then has had a cascade effect onto our series in India, which is a four-Test match series."

"The team won't get back from

India until early November and that's just compressed everything," Sutherland said.

Test matches in 2004-5 will be played in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney with Hobart hosting back-to-back Australia A games against the West Indies and a one-day international between Australia and Pakistan.

CA said the West Indies would return to Australia in the 2005-06 season to play three Tests, including one in Hobart, with three other Tests that summer between Australia and South Africa.

SCHEDULE DOWN UNDER

The schedule of international cricket in Australia over the 2004-05 summer as announced by Cricket Australia on Wednesday:

Table with columns: Date, Test Match, Venue, Date, ODI, Venue, Date, Test Match, Venue, Date, ODI, Venue, Date, ODI, Venue. Includes matches for Australia v New Zealand, Australia v West Indies, and ODI tri-series.

Maple Leaf mini h'ball champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Maple Leaf clinched the first Maple Leaf mini girls handball tournament title with a 5-0 victory against Dhanmondi Tutorial in the final at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex yesterday.

The winners led the first half 3-0. Dhanmondi Quamrunnesa High School finished third after beating Mohammadpur Preparatory 5-2 in the play-off at the same venue.

Average but better

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DS: When you began your career, what were your aspirations?

TB: The first target was naturally to get into the national team. Once I had achieved that, the next goals were to keep performing so that I'm never out of the national fold and to continue playing as long as possible.

DS: You have regularly bowled in the 135-137 kmph region in international games. How important is pace to you?

TB: I clocked 142 kmph on Sunday. Yes, pace is needed because if you can bowl really fast, the opposing batsman will think differently about you. But pace is no good without direction. You can bowl at 150 kmph and batsmen will whack you if you stray in line, even in our domestic cricket. So to me, line and length is more important.

DS: You have deceived at least three West Indian batsmen with slower deliveries. Is that something you have developed recently?

TB: All four of my wickets were with slower. I learned it from watching Indian pacer Venkatesh Prasad on TV. Actually I have been bowling slow leg-cutters ever since I started playing in the National League and got many wickets that way. So I guess the control was always there.

DS: Do you consider this to be your best performance?

TB: Not really. When I first started playing in the Dhaka Premier Division for Mohammedan, I appeared in a couple of games and then was dropped. My next game was against Abahani and it was a vital match. I took four wickets in my first spell and that performance made people sit up and take notice. So for me, that is still my best performance.

DS: Yourself and Alok Kapali are great mates. You come from the same district and have entered the Bangladesh team at the same time. Now you are performing as well as ever while Alok is desperately out of form. How do you feel about that and are you motivating him?

TB: Look, everybody goes through a slump and that's what has happened to Alok. But he'll come out of it you'll see. However, I feel that he should work harder than what he's doing at the moment because if he breaks down mentally now, it will only get worse. If he thinks out of frustration that 'as I'm not scoring runs, I shall not practise, I won't bat', then it won't help. Now is the time to train harder and bat for longer periods in practice.

Bashundhara

FROM PAGE 13

Neyyamur (34) tried to consolidate after the top-order collapse but their efforts were too little to avoid the heavy defeat.

Yuvraj was the most successful Bashundhara bowler claiming three wickets for 25 from seven overs while right-arm pacer Shahjada picked up two for 38 and left-arm spinner Saifullah Khan captured 2-30.

SCORECARD

Scoreboard table showing runs, wickets, and bowlers for Bashundhara vs. Naimur.

Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-19, pen-5) 28 Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs) 269 Fall of wks: 1-43, 2-44, 3-152, 4-181, 5-207, 6-258, 7-258, 8-267, 9-269.

Bowler performance table for Bashundhara vs. Naimur.

BEXIMCO Azam c Shahin b Hasibul 18 Moniruzzaman b Shahjada 22 Parvez c Yuvraj b Saifullah 11 Tikolo b Shahjada 4 Razzak run out 3 Asadullah st Shahin b Yuvraj 34 Neeyamur c Akram b Yuvraj 32 Masudur c and b Yuvraj 5 Russell c Naimur b Saifullah 0 Suja not out 4

Adil didn't turn up Extras: (lb-3, w-7) 10 Total: (All out in 41 overs) 180 Fall of wks: 1-27, 2-47, 3-51, 4-87, 5-106, 6-154, 7-168, 8-174, 9-180.



PHOTO: AFP

Makeshift England captain Marcus Trescothick at a press conference at Lord's in London yesterday.

Eng in tricky situation



AFP, London

Michael Vaughan's knee injury has left England with a potentially tricky problem to solve ahead of Thursday's first Test against New Zealand at Lord's, just when it looked like it was the tourists who had all the fitness worries.

England captain Vaughan's twisted right knee, sustained in freakish fashion Monday while batting in the Lord's nets, means England are contemplating a new opening partner for Marcus Trescothick and a new skipper too unless the Yorkshire batsman makes a remarkable recovery.

However, the prognosis for the 29-year-old stroke-player is not encouraging with England's medical officer rating Vaughan a "serious doubt" for Thursday's match.

Vaughan himself has, however, not yet given up hope of carrying on from where he left off following England's 3-0 Test series win in the Caribbean last month.

"You can never say never and I'll be giving myself every chance to try and get the knee right in time for the Test."

England have two options if Vaughan drops out for the opening match of a three Test series.

They can either take a Test debut to Middlesex captain Andrew Strauss, who impressed during

England's one-day series in the Caribbean, or restore regular number three Mark Butcher to his former opening role and play all-rounder Paul Collingwood.

Surrey left-hander Butcher for one would prefer to stay where he is, saying Tuesday: "I just feel happier at number three now although obviously I would do whatever is wanted."

Strauss, also a left-hander, who knows Lord's well because it is Middlesex's home ground, said: "It's not an ideal situation. I'd prefer to know one way or the other but I know Lord's well and it would be a dream place to make my debut."

There are several candidates for the Test captaincy if Vaughan is unfit with regular stand-in Trescothick the most obvious option although the selectors could chose former skipper Nasser Hussain.

Butcher, who stood in for Hussain

when the latter was injured during the last home series against New Zealand in 1999 which the Kiwis won 2-1 is another option.

Meanwhile, New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming has recovered from a hip problem and is set to open in a Test match for the first time while fellow experienced batsman Nathan Astle takes the skipper's number three spot in his first Test since October following knee surgery.

One consolation for England is that they will not be facing fast bowler Shane Bond, who is still regaining full fitness following a stress fracture of the back.

But New Zealand coach John Bracewell ruled Bond out at the weekend and stole a march on England here Tuesday by naming a side with several all-rounders and eight Test centuries 48 hours in advance.

New Zealand lost their final warm-up match by nine wickets against Kent but for middle-order batsman Craig McMillan that reverse was an encouraging omen.

Members of both teams have talked of an evenly matched contest, something confirmed by the ICC's latest Test table which has England in third place on 103 points and New Zealand just two points behind in fifth.

A drawn series would keep England where they are now but a New Zealand victory would see them take third place.

TEAMS

ENGLAND (likely): Marcus Trescothick (captain), Mark Butcher, Nasser Hussain, Graham Thorpe, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Geraint Jones, Ashley Giles, Steve Harrison, Matthew Hoggard, Simon Jones.

NEW ZEALAND: Stephen Fleming (captain), Mark Richardson, Nathan Astle, Scott Styris, Brendon McCullum, Craig McMillan, Chris Cairns, Jacob Oram, Daniel Vettori, Daryl Tuffey, Chris Martin.

Marcus feels honoured



AFP, London

Marcus Trescothick spoke Wednesday of his pride in being named England captain after regular skipper Michael Vaughan was ruled out of the first Test against New Zealand with a knee injury. But the Somerset left-hander admitted he'd rather have his opening batting partner in the team.

Trescothick, an ever present during England's 3-0 Test series win in the West Indies, told reporters at Lord's on Wednesday where the first Test of three gets underway on Thursday: "It's a huge honour being at the home of cricket and the first Test match of a series having done so well in the winter."

"It's huge in my career. In terms of Michael not being around it's obviously a major hole and a disappointment he's not leading the side out," the 28-year-old added.

"But we'll have to get over it pretty quick because it's an important game starting tomorrow." England were forced into a change of captain after Vaughan

twisted his knee in freakish circumstances Monday while batting in the Lord's nets.

Trescothick got the nod to lead the side ahead of former captain Nasser Hussain, Vaughan's predecessor, and Mark Butcher who deputised for Hussain during the 1999 home series against New Zealand.

However, Trescothick said he did not expect to be in the job for long. "I presume it will be for one game only. Michael is icing the injury and doing everything he can to get back for the second Test."

After Vaughan was stretched off at Lord's on Monday, England called up Middlesex captain and left-handed opener Andrew Strauss as cover.

Trescothick though refused to confirm if the 27-year-old South African-born Strauss, who has played one-day cricket for England, would be making his Test debut on his home ground.

"We'll have a management meeting this evening. Obviously, there are a couple of guys to cover and Strauss was called up as cover for Mike. We'll have to discuss that tonight."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid and clues. Clues include: 1 Bond, for one streak?; 4 Means of payment; 8 Shrek is one; 12 Cry of surprise; 13 Jai --; 14 Go sight-seeing; 15 It's a trill; 17 Forum raiment; 18 A Street-car; Named Desire; 19 Weeding implement; 21 Early hrs.; 22 European capital; 26 Alan Ladd classic; 29 To a great extent; 30 Export; 31 Dr.; 33 Bag; 34 Chicken-king link; 35 Actress living.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters T I W J S Y Q W D I Y J W S Y K U X N J Y P B Y V D S Q D J T I N P V Q Y K K W W P T: " I U X O J N P A X Y P B I U X O W O O X J . "

It's now upto ICC "I think that's something that's got to be fiercely protected by the game of cricket." The two-Test tour also appeared to be in doubt Wednesday after Zimbabwe's senior players refused to end their strike. The ZCU had expected them to call off their strike after an intensive sequence of meetings over the last 36 hours. But Grant Flower, one of the rebels, said: "No, we are not available for the Tests, but we might be for the one-day international series. There's a chance that might happen." Flower said they had submitted "certain proposals" to the ZCU board of directors. The rebels are also protesting the decision not to reinstate deposed captain Heath Streak. The ZCU had planned to name its side to play Australia on Thursday. Zimbabwe coach Geoff Marsh, whose young side was beaten by an innings and 254 runs by Sri Lanka in the second Test in Bulawayo this week, said he had doubts whether the side could keep taking such thrashings. Marsh, who has not renewed his contract and will resign in September, was unsure if the coming Tests should go ahead.