



D-DAY APPROACHES! England goalkeeper David James (front C) and teammates warming up during a training session in Lisbon on June 15.

Test of English

FROM PAGE 13 Switzerland, missing midfield anchorman Johann Vogel after his red card in their dismal 0-0 draw with Croatia, cannot afford to sit back if they are to stand a chance of qualifying.

Should they survive what England captain David Beckham promises will be a torrid start for Koebi Kuhn's side, they will look to strikers Alexander Frei and 34-year-old Stephane Chapuisat to cause trouble for keeper David James.

The Swiss, who beat England 2-1 in a World Cup qualifier in 1981, at least know they have nothing to lose.

Bad news for Brad

AFP, Sydney

Pace bowler Brad Williams on Wednesday was ruled out of Australia's two-Test cricket series against Sri Lanka with a lower back complaint, Cricket Australia said.

Williams, who was forced home early from last month's Zimbabwe tour with the injury, was not considered sufficiently recovered by team medical staff to resume full training.

The West Australian tearaway was last week named in the 13-man Australian squad for the July series subject to a fitness test but will now remain at home to help his recovery.

"Brad has not recovered enough from the back injury he sustained in Zimbabwe to resume full training and has therefore been ruled out of the forthcoming series against Sri Lanka," Australian team doctor Trefor James said in a statement.

Williams is now looking to resume international cricket in the ICC Champions' Trophy limited overs tournament in England in September.

"It's a disappointing result because I really haven't played that much cricket over the last couple of months and I was looking forward to rejoining the team in Darwin," Williams said in the statement.

"I was confident I'd be available for selection and had started some light training but it doesn't look like I'll be in a position to increase my intensity levels for another couple of weeks.

"I'll continue to work on my rehabilitation in Perth and I'm sure I'll be ready to go in time for the ICC Champions' Trophy."

Cricket Australia said selectors had not yet decided on a replacement for Williams.

The first of the two Tests against Sri Lanka takes place in Darwin on July 1.

Mills blow for Kiwis

Cricket

AFP, London

New Zealand pace bowler Kyle Mills is the latest to succumb to the injury crisis that has bedevilled the Kiwis' tour of England.

Mills sustained a rib injury during the third and final Test at Trent Bridge last week and has been ruled out of the forthcoming one-day triangular NatWest Series, it was announced on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old from Auckland made his Test debut in Nottingham but is more established in the limited-overs side having played 32 One-Day Internationals for his country since 2001.

The left-arm swing bowler James Franklin, who joined the Test squad prior to the Trent Bridge Test to bolster the depleted party, will stay on as his replacement in the one-day squad.

Mills managed just six overs in England's first innings and did not take the field at all in their second innings.

Franklin returned to the Test side to win his third cap after more than three years' absence.

He was called up from his club cricket commitments in the Lancashire League with Rishton.

The 23-year-old Wellingtonian impressed on his comeback taking 4 for 104 in the first innings and 2 for 59 in the second.

Like Mills he is more experienced in the One-Day International arena having made 28 appearances for his country in the shorter format -- although the last one was in April 2002.

Mills is the second Black Cap to head home due to injury after the fast bowler Shane Bond was forced to miss the whole Test series.

Bond, one of the stars of the 2003 World Cup, is trying to make a complete recovery from a back

ailment and was replaced by fellow paceman Ian Butler.

The New Zealand Herald reported that Daniel Vettori and Michael Pappas, both of whom missed the Trent Bridge Test due to injuries, will stay on with the one-day squad.

Vettori sustained a hamstring strain in the Second Test at Headingley while Pappas broke a finger in his left hand in the first innings at Leeds.

The other players who suffered injuries in the 14-man Test squad were Craig McMillan, also with a broken finger, Jacob Oram with a side strain and Daryl Tuffey and Nathan Astle, both with knee injuries.

New Zealand begin their NatWest Series campaign against England in a day-night match at Old Trafford on June 24. The competition also involves the West Indies. The final will be held at Lord's on July 10.

Lanka in Murali's grip

FROM PAGE 13

Muralitharan's 'doosra'.

Sri Lanka last week formally asked the ICC to change the laws and increase tolerance limit for spinners to 15 degrees.

The tolerance limits set by the ICC are five degrees for spinners, 7.5 for medium-pacers and 10 for pacemen.

Muralitharan initially straightened his arm by 14 degrees while bowling the 'doosra' during tests in Australia in April, but brought it down to 10.2 degrees after going through a remediation process.

Rajapakse said Muralitharan, with a world record 527 wickets in 90 Tests, was a national asset and he would do everything within his power and that of the government to defend him.

Muralitharan, whose unorthodox action has seen him being no-balled for 'throwing' in the past, came under fresh scrutiny because of the 'doosra', a delivery which spins away from right-handers instead of coming into them a like normal off-break.

The spinner was told in April he could face a 12-month ban if he persisted with the 'doosra'.

SLC had argued that a deformity

in elbow made Muralitharan's bowling action look suspect.

Former Sri Lankan cricket team physiotherapist Alex Kontouri had said that Muralitharan was a "bio-mechanical mess" who needed to be nursed carefully.

The spinner has already suffered a dislocated shoulder, a hernia operation, torn quadriceps and a nagging groin.

His bowling action has been questioned by Australian umpires and continues to trigger debate around the world as he sets his sights on the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies.

Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup-winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga says Muralitharan has plenty of cricket left in him and is critical of SLC's handling of the controversy.

"We should not have sent him for tests in Australia. In that case, other bowlers should also be subjected to tests," said Ranatunga.

A lawyer has suggested the easiest way out for Muralitharan is for the bowler to wear a long-sleeved shirt so that the bowling angle cannot be seen.

The spinner who became a national hero after smashing retired West Indies paceman

James was unprepared

AFP, London

Goalkeeper David James, left gasping by the free kick from Zinedine Zidane that set up France's 2-1 win over England in Euro 2004, has admitted he saw no footage of the Frenchman's deadball strikes prior to the game.

"We watched the compilation tape of France in the build-up to the game to look at their set-piece plays, corners and free kicks. But there was no footage of Zidane's free kicks," the Manchester City keepersaid.

"I'll have to have a word with whoever put that one together," James said, quoted by The Sun newspaper Wednesday.

The stunning 91st-minute equaliser set up France's win in the Group B opener.

A spokesman for England's governing football body, the Football Association, said: "Our video technician compiled a tape of France's last seven games over the past year and all set-piece situations were included.

"Unfortunately there were no notable Zidane free kicks during those games so consequently there was no footage available."

The Sun added that France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez was well-armed to combat David Beckham after being given a detailed video of his penalties and free kicks.

"After watching the video we knew Beckham always shoots to the right," the paper quoted Barthez as saying.

The French keeper blocked his former clubmate's penalty strike with 18 minutes remaining in the game and England 1-0 up.

Big win for Nawabpur

UNB, Dhaka

Nawabpur KC registered a 4-0 victory over Manik Smirty Sangsad in the Shinepukur Ceramics Pioneer Football League at the Basabo ground yesterday.

Arif stuck twice while Jahangir and Indra netted one goal each.

At the Dhanmondi Club ground, Surjasena SC defeated Arambagh Junior KS 1-0 in a west zone match.

Zakir scored the all-important goal.

The day's other matches, Hazi Jumman vs Great Wall and Khilgaon Jubo Sangha vs Khilgaon Pragati Club, were abandoned due to heavy rain.

B'baria cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Durbar Cricket Club and Chalandika Cricket Club won their respective matches in the Shaheed Freedom Fighter Rango Mia Cup tournament at Shahjadapur Junior High School playground in Brahminbaria yesterday.

In the first match Durbar defeated Progati Cricket Club by 17 runs.

Winning the toss Durbar batted first and collected 80 runs in 26.2 overs after being all out. Kaiser topscored with 48 and took three wickets.

In reply, Progati were all out for 72 in 25.1 overs.

In the other match Chalandika recorded a five-run win over Nabarun Cricket Club.

Chalandika batted first and managed 80 for eight in stipulated 30 overs. Hamid topscored with 42 and grabbed three wickets.

In reply, Nabarun collected 75 all out in 27 overs.

Ruud class

FROM PAGE 13

which neither side threatened the other's goal.

Germany looked most threatening in the 23rd when Kuranyi drove a shot from 25 meters (yards) that van der Sar leaped high to tip over the crossbar. Seconds later, defender Christian Woerns bounced a close-in header off the turf and over the bar.

Germany was taking the play from the Dutch midway through the half, and the goal seemed to give it even more confidence. Kahn had little to do in the first half.

The best chance for the Netherlands came in the 42nd minute when Rafael van der Vaart turned and sent a low, left-footed shot just inches wide of the far post after collecting a through ball from Edgar Davids.

The Dutch opened with two changes in the second half -- Wesley Sneijder for Edgar Davids and Marc Overmars for Boudewijn Zenden.

They tried to spread play out, particularly from the left side with Overmars. He got off a blistering shot from 20 meters (yards) in the 74th that Kahn punched away. The shot came as the Dutch sent on striker Pierre van Hooijdonk for extra punch and his size and power in the air shook the German defense late in the game. It was Hooijdonk who forced Ernst into the error before the Dutch scored.

"The mistake ruined our game," said German striker Kevin Kuranyi.

Yuvraj relishes the prospect

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Yuvraj Singh, almost a certainty to open in Tests next season, has revealed that he wished to follow the same route as Virender Sehwag.

Yuvraj, who is currently at the training camp in Bangalore, on Tuesday spoke about how Sehwag had blazed a trail with regard to opening the batting.

"He has done tremendously in the opener's slot," Yuvraj said. "So, if I can do the same and be as successful as Sehwag, it would be good for the team."

Having had a successful time as an opener with Punjab last season, Yuvraj was optimistic about his

new role.

"I think it's an advantage because if one sees through the new ball, one can also score big runs. So, I am looking forward to the challenge."

In the last domestic season, Yuvraj opened in all the three matches that he played for Punjab. He found the transition very smooth and the report card included 138 against Delhi, 80 against Railways and 38 in a low-scoring game against Andhra Pradesh.

When asked if he will return to the middle-order if he did not succeed as an opener, he said: "When you play cricket at international level, you don't think about ifs and don'ts. Whatever the situation, you have to go through it, and be positive about it."

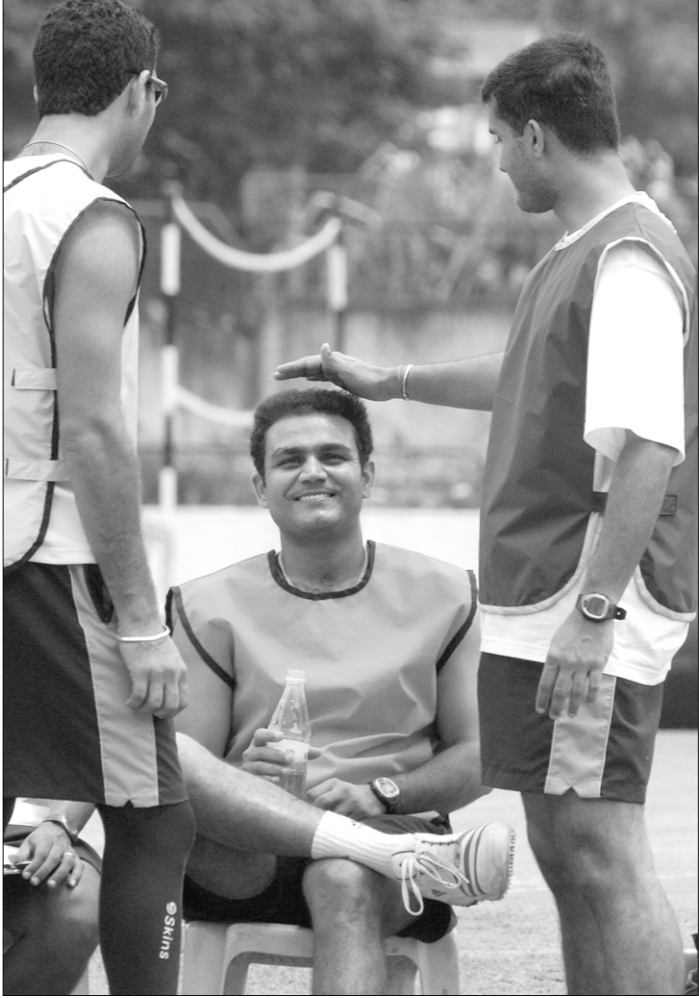


PHOTO: AFP

YOU BETTER SLOW DOWN: India captain Sourav Ganguly (R) shares a light moment with Virender Sehwag while Yuvraj Singh looks on in between training sessions on the third day of a fitness camp at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore yesterday.

Federer eyeing repeat act

WIMBLEDON

REUTERS, Halle

A photographer at last week's Halle Open complained that Roger Federer made a poor subject because he looks bored when he is playing.

It is an ominous sign for rivals hoping to steal the Swiss world number one's Wimbledon crown

when the Grand Slam grasscourt event begins on Monday.

Federer, 22, strolled to a second consecutive Halle title without dropping a set, crushing American Marty Fish 6-0 6-3 in the final on Sunday in less than an hour and extending his winning streak on grass to 17 matches.

"I'm much more confident this year than last year and I'm definitely playing better," said Federer, who was travelling to London on Tuesday to begin training.

"There are always little things I would like to improve but if I'm playing at this level already then obviously things are looking good for Wimbledon too," he added.

Federer's success at last year's Halle tournament, when he beat local favourite Nicolas Kiefer 6-1 6-3 in the final, paved the way for his ascent to the top of the world rankings and for his triumphs at the All England Club and the Australian Open.

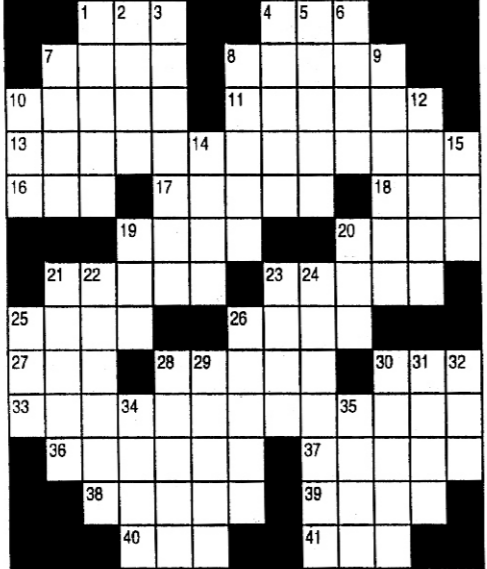
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 27 Candle count 28 Old-Unconquering 4 Scoundrel time 7 Go market-place 8 Revolutionary ally 33 Trite polite 10 Victor pick-up 11 Put on a pedestal flavor 13 Trite show 16 Demure 17 Put forth effort 18 Greek cross 19 "The Ghost and Mrs. —" 20 Zone 21 Leading 23 Rids of rind 25 Greet the villain 26 Cohort of Lon and Boris

DOWN 1 Frothy ast 19 "—Miniver" 20 Support system? 21 Skirmish 22 "... —, and West ..." 23 Llamas' home 24 Fear-stricken 25 Hem's partner 26 Treasure 28 Remark to the audience 29 Moving in circles, as a current 30 Inebriated 31 Look lecherously 32 Indivisible 34 McAn of footwear fame 35 December 26th event

Solution time: 21 mins.

SOLO PSY PHIL
EPIC ACT ROSA
RENT PASSOVER
ANDOVER KNEED
PER FIT
HABIT POPOVER
ADO PAX AGO
LAYOVER BILLGE
BEG PAR
WALIST HANOVER
ONCE OVER NOVA
EKES ISM ITEM
SASS ASS CESS



CRYPTOQUIP
M E J B N W I P T Q N J Z I
U M V X I J U Q S I V E P W J
Z M G M T Y, I X P S Z Q X N P B N T
J I X J G M T Y I J H H P S T V ?
Yesterday's Cryptokuip: MOST HARPISTS LIKE TO BE SPIRITED AND BRAVE. THEY'RE VERY PLUCKY MUSICIANS.
Today's Cryptokuip Clue: M equals I
The Cryptokuip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.