

Another ECB boss resigns

AFP, London

Another senior administrator at the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has decided to quit, with Director of Communications John Read announcing Thursday his intention to resign.

"I've enjoyed enormously working for the ECB and being part of the executive team that has helped to drive the game forward," Read said.

"I was also delighted with the huge success of the new Twenty20 Cup and the media campaign that helped attract over 250,000 spectators into county grounds to watch the inaugural competition."

Chief Executive Tim Lamb will step down in September, in a move widely linked to his handling of the crisis over whether England should play matches in Zimbabwe.

'Wharf can be the player'

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former England wicketkeeper Alec Stewart believes that Glamorgan's Alex Wharf can fill England's need for another one-day all-rounder.

Hosts England missed out on the final of the NatWest Series after coming second best in matches against the West Indies and New Zealand.

"We need to find one more bowling all-rounder," Stewart said.

"A name I'll throw in is Alex Wharf down at Glamorgan, I think he's got half a chance from the little bit I've seen of him."

Glamorgan are riding high in both the National League and the Twenty20 Cup and several players have caught the eye in the limited-overs competitions.

Mike Powell is pushing for inclusion into England's one-day side as a batsman, coming close as an injury call-up to the England squad for their opening NatWest Series game against New Zealand.

Pioneer soccer

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At the Kamlapur Stadium, Mohammed Ali SC and Tejgaon Nabaratanga shared points in a goalless draw in the north zone match while Prasanna Poddar Lane drew 1-1 with Noakhali Football Academy 1-1 in south zone at the Mirpur Outer Stadium.

Contracts not

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ime frame on this, and the board feels it is best that we take our time to make sure the system is as foolproof as possible," he said.

"An agreement document has to be in place first and that will take some time. This is a major step and the contracts will be binding on both the board and the players so we don't want to rush into anything."

'Take rest'

FROM PAGE 13

ment to bat first so many times and it made it difficult for the top order to really get going.

"It's crucial in one-day cricket to get an opening stand if you're going to get big totals. It's important you get off to a good start in those first 15 overs and utilise them as effectively as you can and if you look at it we haven't done that."

Fletcher intends to review England's performance in the NatWest Series with the selectors before the start of the Test series and make his recommendations for the ICC Champions Trophy, which is being hosted by England for the first time next September.

"We've got to sit down as selectors and discuss a few things in the next week or so and have a look at what happened because otherwise there are certain things you may forget about which may be crucial later on," he added.



LEARN FROM THE LEGEND: Former South African opening batsman Barry Richards imparts some batting tips to Yousuf Youhana during a practice session of the Pakistan national team at the Gaddafi Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Peace talks on in Zim

Cricket

AFP, Harare

Lawyers representing the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) and 15 striking white players were in exploratory talks here today Thursday to see if there is any way to break the three month impasse caused by the sacking of captain Heath Streak.

Alwyn Pichanick, for the union, and Chris Venturas, for the players, are acting on an International Cricket Council instruction to make another attempt at finding resolution to the stand-off.

The ICC gave them 14 days from June 30 to find a solution -- a near impossible task, considering that there has been a hostile stalemate through almost 100 days.

Eight of those 14 days were allowed to elapse before discussions between the legal representatives began and on Friday Venturas and seven players still living in Zimbabwe leave for England, where they will join seven others for a three weeks long charity cricket tour.

The ICC is anxious that the dispute is settled domestically, but it has made clear to the ZCU that it has the right to intervene through its

Disputes Resolution Sub-committee if there is another failure.

However, this is also a cause of disagreement between the ICC and the ZCU. The ICC claims any decision which might have to be made ultimately by such a sub-committee will have legal standing and be binding. The ZCU, through its chairman Peter Chingoka, disputes this view.

However, the ZCU has told AFP that it is working on what it calls an "alternative mechanism" if the current talks fail. Officials failed to elaborate but it appears to be some form of proposal for a compromise.

The ICC has also not said if they had received any "alternative mechanism" from Harare or just what it is.

Zimbabwe cricket was ripped apart on April 2 when Streak complained to ZCU directors through general manager Vincent Flogg about the make-up of the selection panel and some of their choices, which he claimed put race above merit in some instances.

The directors immediately took exception and they accepted what they saw as Streak's threatened retirement from all forms of cricket, which Streak vehemently denies making.

All the contracted white players

demanded his reinstatement. They saw his departure as a sacking.

When this was refused they all went on strike, refusing to practice or make themselves available for selection.

Since then, a very young and inexperienced second string was called up to represent Zimbabwe in international matches and were badly beaten by Sri Lanka and Australia. This resulted in Australia declining to play them in Tests, a policy adopted by Pakistan, and by England, who are due here in November for a one-day series.

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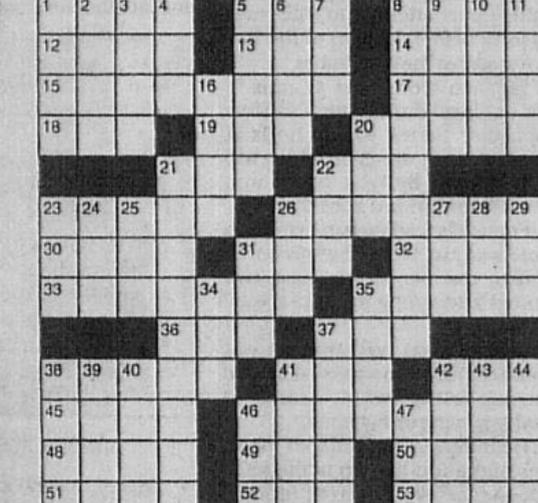
The next Test series for the Zimbabweans will be against Bangladesh in January. This will be a "test" indeed, for Zimbabwe's future as a full Test playing member of the ICC will come under review after that series.



PHOTO: STAR
Action from the BKSP Cup U-16 football match between Chittagong Division and Dhaka Division at the BKSP ground in Savar yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 See 38 Obey a
1-Down 41 Tr-
umphed 5 Glisten-
Spiked 42 Explain
club further 6 Sharpen
12 Incessantly 45 Hurry
13 Gluttony 46 Unmen-
14 Cupid's tionsable
specialty 48 Sandwich
15 "The 49 Pub order
View" 50 Flaccid
alumna 51 History
17 Places 52 Thick-
18 Food- ness
safety org. 53 Sall
19 Indivisible support
20 Buffalo 1 With 1-
21 Bond, for example
22 Recreation- Across, identical
23 Pilfered, and then some
25 Pointed, and then some
30 Timbu- tu's land
31 Irri- 32 Satan's forte
33 Over- turned
35 Silcon family surname
36 Eviscer- ate
37 Part of HRF, some-
times



Solution time: 21 mins.

DOWN
JOHN'S PUT TUBA
GRIT EER OBEY
SALON ZINC
COW POKIER
PACKRAT SIDLE
ALAI GAB NOSE
DONNA JUGGLER
SEETHES RAP
PLEA ALF SEATS
HEAD DOE TRIP
DARE EWE DORY

CRYPTOQUIP
E I LAT K X P B B J P X Q T C H T X L
H T X E B A T B , A T J E B A T B L P
O T O D X E T Q B E C Q P J W

N W Q I P D X N K X P B B .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I SUPPOSE HE REALLY ENJOYS GROWING NONFLOWERING PLANTS JUST FOR THE FERN OF IT!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals S

The Cryptoquip 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.

Ponting frightens SL

FROM PAGE 13

don't bowl well you'll be able to score runs quickly, because there's extra bounce and pace and the ball can fly over the place.

"We have to be patient on this wicket and the experience we have in the side would suggest that we should be pretty good at that."

"The conditions are going to be perfect for us so they are going to find it hard to win, but we have to guard against the conditions doing all the work for us."

"You still have to bowl the ball in the right area, you have to watch the ball closely as a batsman, we have to apply ourselves over five days and play the best cricket we can and the result will look after itself."

Sti Lankan skipper Marvan Atapattu points the finger squarely at the team's top batsmen for letting the side down in Darwin and has called for greater application in what will be difficult playing conditions for the tourists.

"We haven't been let down by our bowling, the guys have done a brilliant job," Atapattu told his match-eve press conference.

"Even without Murali (world record holder Muttiah Muralitharan) we got the Australians out twice for 200 in Darwin, so you can ask no

more from them.

"It's the batsmen who have to contribute more and we are focusing on that hopefully to come sooner than later."

"We are experienced enough to know what has gone in the past, and we have to look to the future and we are all mature enough to put those things behind us and start fresh every time."

"We don't want to think about the negative things, we are going into a fresh game. The main thing is to bat well, get a bigger score, that's the key."

TEAMS
AUSTRALIA (likely): Justin Langer, Matthew Hayden, Ricky Ponting (captain), Damien Martyn, Darren Lehmann, Simon Katich, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Jason Gillespie, Michael Kasprowicz, Glenn McGrath, Stuart MacGill (12th man).

SRI LANKA (likely): Marvan Atapattu (captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Thilan Samaraweera, Russell Arnold or Romesh Kaluwitharana, Chaminda Vaas, Upul Chandana, Nuwan Zoysa, Lasith Malinga.

Umpires: Billy Bowden (New Zealand) and Aleem Dar (Pakistan).

Serena, Sharapova coming to China

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Serena Williams and her Wimbledon conqueror Maria Sharapova have signed up for the inaugural China Open, a tournament organisers want to make the premier tennis event in Asia.

Also on board are hometown favourite Zheng Jie and Jelena Dokic, looking to pull herself out of a slump stemming from a bitter feud with erratic father Damiir, who claims that she needs psychiatric and drugs tests.

"I am very excited about playing in front of the Chinese people," said Williams, a six-times Grand Slam winner still reeling from her shock 6-1, 6-4 Wimbledon final loss to teen pin-up Sharapova.

"We, the top players, are role models for the youth and I take such a role seriously. I hope my participation in the China Open will motivate the youth of China to take on this great sport even more."

The 17-year-old Siberian-born, Florida-trained Sharapova said she too was eager to play in China and lift the trophy.

"To win the first-ever China Open would be great," said the blonde starlet.

"It would be really special. I am not sure who will be presenting the China Open trophy but I can tell you that I want to be the one receiving it."

"I will do whatever it takes to succeed."

While her supermodel good looks have drawn attention, Sharapova insisted that she wanted to be remembered for her tennis abilities and not her physical attributes.

"A lot of people are saying I am pretty, I have a good figure and all that," she said.

"I know a lot of fans also like me because of my looks. But my target is to make a mark in the world of tennis as a great player."

China's Zheng, whose fourth round appearance at the French Open was the best ever Grand Slam

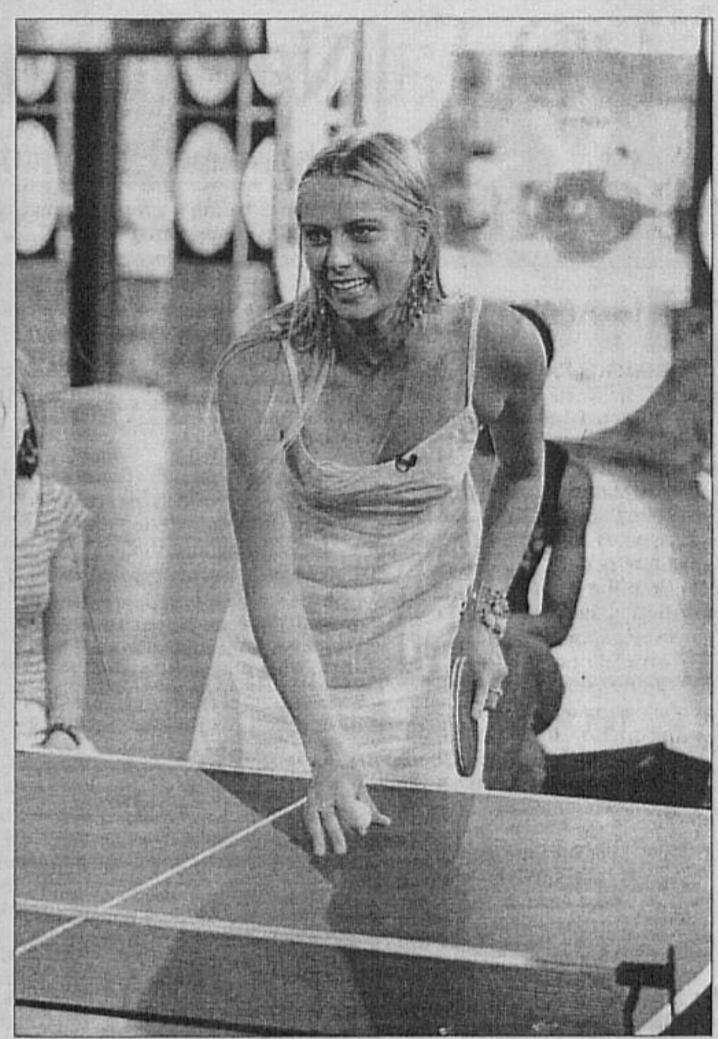


PHOTO: AFP
New Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova plays table tennis during MTV's Total Request Live programme at the MTV Times Square Studios in New York City on July 7.

Carloś Ferrero, German Rainer Schuettler, Marat Safin of Russia and Argentinian David Nalbandian.

The tournament, from September 10-26, will be played on hardcourt at the Beijing Tennis Center, which is still under construction.

China is attracting a growing number of top-rate sports events in the run-up to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Federer immortalised

Tennis

AFP, Gstaad

After etching his name into the Wimbledon record books with a second straight title, Roger Federer watched Wednesday as a sculptor worked to immortalise his image on a bust commissioned by organisers at the \$44,750-euro (669,000-dollar) Swiss Open.

Despite a hectic post-Wimbledon schedule, Switzerland's runaway world number one is fulfilling the third year of an agreement to compete in his home event.

"I made an deal and I'm happy to stick with it," said Federer, the best-known of any Swiss sportsman. "But it may be tough in the future, if I keep doing well at Wimbledon."

Federer owes a loyalty to the tournament, which gave him his first wild card entry as a youngster in 1998.

As Federer met with Swiss press in a spa-hotel in this VIP village, a

sculptor worked to define the facial details of Federer on what will become a life-sized bust of the player.

The genuine article - also wearing his trademark pony-tail, happily posed for photos with his image - constructed of a different kind of clay than the type he's normally used to.

"It's just great being back in Switzerland and playing in front of the Swiss people," said Federer, 47-4 so far in 2004. "I'm not putting any pressure on myself, but I'd love to go further than last year."

Federer plays for the quarter-finals Thursday against 2.08-metre Croatian giant Ivo Karlovic.

The Swiss said he feels relief after defending the first of his three Grand Slam crowns with a four-set defeat of Andy Roddick on the grass. "I've defended most of my big points. But (U.S. Open champion) Roddick is entering his big season."

"It gets a little bit easier for me after I won at Wimbledon."

Federer last year lost the Gstaad

final on the fast clay of Jiri Novak.

The fourth-seeded Czech, spending this week with his family in the alpine splendor at 900 metres, booked into his third quarter-final at the event which he has twice won.

Novak, champion here in 2001 and 2003, put out Spain's Albert Montanes 3-6, 6-3, 6-3. The win was the 12th match in succession at the event for the world number 18.

In other second-round play, Italian Potito Starace, a qualifier ranked 145, defeated Romanian Victor Hănescu 3-6, 7-6, 7-6, saving two match points in the 12th