

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 Tejaan Nabataranga 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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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.

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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.

Peace talks on in Zim

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 Hogg 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

demanding 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.

Following talks in Dubai last month between the ICC, the ZCU and cricket board representatives of India, South Africa and Australia, it was agreed that the "new" Zimbabwe would be given intensive coaching and that India and South Africa "A" teams would tour Zimbabwe later this month and in August.

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.



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

Athens workers demand Olympic bonus

REUTERS, Athens

Public transport workers in Athens have started a six-hour strike to back demands for an Olympic bonus for working longer hours during the Summer Games next month, unions say.

About 11,000 employees in the Athens metro, suburban rail, local bus services and trolley buses were stopping work between 0800 GMT and 1400 GMT (9 a.m. and 3 p.m. British time), to press the government to compensate them for overtime work during the August 13-29 Olympic Games.

Hotel employees in the Greek capital went on strike a day earlier to press demands that they too get an Olympic bonus.

"The fact that we have to cancel our summer vacations and work overtime above the labour law limit upsets our families' plans," the transport unions said in a statement. "Our work has to be compensated with an Olympic bonus."

Most public transport firms plan to extend their schedules, operating around the clock in some cases, to serve thousands of visitors travelling to Olympic venues during the games.

Games organisers have said some 600,000 ticket-holders, volunteers and staff are expected to use public transport for free during the Olympics.

N Korea athletes Athens bound

REUTERS, Seoul

Reclusive communist North Korea is expected to send at least 27 athletes to the Athens Olympics next month.

The team from Pyongyang would consist of eight gymnasts, six competitors in judo, four weightlifters, three table tennis players, three shooters, two boxers and a wrestler, Seoul's Yonhap agency said, quoting the Korea Sports Council.

The athletes and about 50 North Korean officials have agreed to march together with South Korea's delegation of 376 athletes and officials in the Athens Games opening ceremony.

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 Damir, 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



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.

performance by a Chinese player, said that having an WTA/ATP event in China was a massive boost for Chinese tennis.

"It is very exciting for me, for our national team, for tennis in China and for all tennis fans," she said.

"It is a dream for me to win the China Open someday."

The men's event has also drawn a clutch of top ranked players including Spain's Carlos Moya and Juan

Carlos 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 544,750-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 to Jiri Novak.

The fourth-seeded Czech, spending this week with his family in the alpine splendor at 900 metres, booked into his third quarterfinal 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 Hanescu 3-6, 7-6, 7-6, saving two match points in the 12th game of the final set on the way into a second decider.

Starace, who reached the third round at Roland Garros against Marat Safin, was playing only his seventh career match at the ATP level.

Spain's Ruben Ramirez Hidalgo defeated Austrian Stefan Koubek 6-3, 6-4 as bright sunshine replaced clouds and the threat of rain from the morning.

'Keep Darwin, Cairns Tests'

Cricket

AFP, Cairns

Ricky Ponting on Thursday urged Cricket Australia to stick with Cairns and Darwin as Test cricket venues amid reports that the experiment with tropical northern tours will be phased out.

Darwin and Cairns have hosted Tests against Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the last two years but no tours are scheduled in the northern Australian cities in the next two years.

With Zimbabwe and Bangladesh facing possible demotion as Test-playing nations as part of an International Cricket Council review, future playing schedules will be trimmed throwing into doubt the Australian dry-season tours.

But Ponting said he was reluctant to see the holiday venues ditched.

"We really enjoy these games we play in Darwin and Cairns and I think it's important that we try and grow this game and take it to the more remote cricketing areas of Australia," Ponting said here on Thursday.

"The crowds in Darwin weren't great last year but the facilities in Cairns are world class and we just really enjoy the experience of being here."

"Hopefully, we'll get a good crowd and a good turnout and they'll see some good cricket and hopefully North Queensland and Darwin can keep growing as cricket communities."

Ponting said the Australian players would be disappointed if Darwin and Cairns were dropped off the international circuit.

"Pick any of the guys out of the side and ask them what they think about being here and playing these games and they absolutely love it," he said.

"It's a great part of the world to be, especially at this time of year."

Sri Lankan captain Marvan Atapattu endorsed the move to play in Australia's Top End but said Darwin's Marrara Oval needed more work.

"I certainly don't have a problem, I think cricket should be taken all around the world, that's how our game will prosper. I don't have a problem in playing anywhere," he said.

On the controversial Darwin drop-in pitch, he said: "I'm sure they'll learn from it and the next team who goes there will get a better wicket than that."

Australia beat Sri Lanka by 149 runs inside three days in Darwin.

Cricket makes

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Cricket, a non-Olympic sport, was introduced at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998, but was discarded at the next edition in Manchester four years later due to the lukewarm response from the major cricketing nations.

Asian giants India and Pakistan will have to reschedule their Test commitments in December 2006 in order to send full-strength teams to the Asian Games.

India are scheduled to tour South Africa at that time, while Pakistan will be hosting the West Indies. However, both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will be free then, according to the ICC's 10-year Test schedule.

The United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong have qualified for the six-nation Asia Cup limited-overs tournament to be held in Sri Lanka from July 16.

Rebel Red Lions

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through into other countries."

Zimbabwe agreed to postpone their remaining 2004 tests last month after the Zimbabwe Cricket Union became embroiled in a dispute with 15 of the country's leading white players over team selection.

The players, angry over Streak's departure as captain, made themselves unavailable for selection and were sacked, leaving Zimbabwe with a side unable to compete at the top level.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	38 Obey a comma	3 Smaller plateau	23 Dallas sch.
1 See	41 Tri-umphed	4 Period	24 Savion Glover's skill
1-Down	42 Explain further	5 Glistening	25 Bullfighting bravo
5 The girl	45 Hurry	6 Sharpen bird?	26 Letter from London
8 Spiked club	46 Unmen-tionables	8 Shirks work	27 Zsa Zsa's sis
12 Incessantly	48 Sandwich treat	9 Famous cookie name	28 Disen-cumber
13 Glutton	49 Pub order	10 Gabriella Chanel	29 Cunning
14 Cupid's specialty	50 Flaccid	11 Green acres of war	31 Teller stories
15 "The View" alumna	51 History	12 Dennis the Menace	32 Payable
17 Places	52 Thick-ness	13 Green Acres	33 Bob's pal
18 Food-safety org.	53 Sail support	14 Easy gait	37 Sweet-heart
19 Indivisible	DOWN	20 Chignon	38 Support
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22 Recreation	then	35 Bob's pal	41 Volition
23 Piffled	some	37 Sweet-heart	42 Carreras rendition
26 Pointed witlicisms		38 Support	43 Turns down
30 Timbuk-tu's land		39 Emanation	44 Cabinet div.
31 Irritate		40 Deals with	46 You can't stand to have one
32 Satan's forte		41 Volition	47 Shade provider
33 Over-turned		42 Carreras rendition	
35 Silly family surname		43 Turns down	
36 Eviscerate		44 Cabinet div.	
37 Part of HRH, some-times		46 You can't stand to have one	
		47 Shade provider	

Solution time: 21 mins.

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SALON ZINGHER
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ALAN GAB NOSE
ONNA JUGGLED
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DARE EWE DRY

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CRYPTOQUIP

EI LAT KXPBBJPXQ TCHTXL
HTXEBATB, AT JEBATB LP
OT ODXETQ BEC QPJW

NWQ IPDX NKXPBB

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

Today's Cryptquip Clue: B equals S
The Cryptquip 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.