

Rofe joins Northants

AFP, London

Australian seamer Paul Rofe has joined Northamptonshire as a replacement overseas player for the final month of the season, the English county announced Wednesday.

South Australia pace bowler Rofe, 23, will join the club after Australia batsman Martin Love's one-month stint at Wantage Road ends in mid-August.

Love himself is deputising for Martin van Jaarsveld, who is due to tour Sri Lanka with South Africa.

Northamptonshire coach Kepler Wessels, the former Australia and South Africa batsman, said "The thinking behind this is quite simple really."

"We have five championship matches after Martin Love leaves, we need to get some wins and to do that we have to take 20 wickets."

"Paul had a good season with the ball in Australian domestic cricket and so he comes with a useful pedigree."

Rofe, a former Australia Under-19s and Academy representative, claimed 36 wickets at 27.47 in ten matches during 2003-04, and was chosen for Australia A in their game against the Indian tourists.

In all first-class cricket he has taken 108 wickets at 28.98 to date, with a career-best bowling performance of seven for 52 and 13 wickets in the match for South Australia against New South Wales at Adelaide in January 2002.

Northamptonshire are currently bottom of the County Championship First Division table and are facing relegation to the second tier of English cricket's domestic first-class competition, having failed to win any of their nine games so far.

US athletics still hopeful

AFP, Sacramento

There's a reason American athletics officials are confident of a strong Athens Olympic medal haul despite doping concerns and struggling veterans -- a new generation of rising young stars.

In the shadow of an escalating doping scandal, older US stars are passing the baton to fresh faces and launching a new era at the United States Olympic Athletics Trials, which resume here Thursday after two rest days.

"The younger runners are stepping up," said 1999 world 200m champion Inger Miller.

"It's about time there was a new wave come up. There have been one or two but there hasn't been a new wave since '94 when I came up."

Sprinters Justin Gatlin, Shawn Crawford and LaTasha Colander -- guided by reputed BALCO steroid scandal-linked coach Trevor Graham -- lead newcomers arriving as undetectable drugs and doping bring US performances into question.

"With all that has happened, controversy and scandal, the sport still survives," Miller said.

"And it always will."

Sydney Olympic five-medal hero Marion Jones is under doping suspicion and well shy of her best efforts, having failed to qualify to defend her 100m title with chances yet to come in the long jump and 200m.

Let's do it again

FROM PAGE 13

year's runners-up Mohammedan Sporting Club, surprise package Sheikh Russel KC, Jhenidah Mohammedan, Unmochnan Club of Bagerhat and Bangladesh Air Force.

Three teams will qualify in the six-team second phase final round to be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.



Pakistan skipper Inzamamul Haq (L) and batsman Yousuf Youhana find something amusing as they relax during a practice session in Colombo yesterday.

ZCU to abide by ICC

Cricket

AFP, London

World cricket's governing body said Wednesday its proposed method of resolving the Zimbabwe player dispute had been accepted by the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) and it was now just waiting to hear from the rebel cricketers themselves.

In a statement issued ahead of a meeting with the players' legal representative Chris Venturas in London on Friday, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said the ZCU had agreed to a system that would see a three-person tribunal, sitting in Zimbabwe, resolve the impasse.

One member would be nominated by the ZCU, the other by the players, and the third, the chairman, by these two people.

The system, an alternative to its standard but lengthier disputes resolution process, has been specially devised by the ICC in a bid to end the crisis that has caused chaos in Zimbabwean cricket for several months.

In April the ZCU sacked then Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak after the fast bowler, now at English county Warwickshire, accused the

board of making some team selections based on race rather than merit.

When his colleague tried but failed to get Streak reinstated they went on strike in protest.

That led the ZCU to sack a total of 15 senior players, all white, a massive loss for a country with an already small pool of cricketers to choose from.

During ICC's executive board meeting, at its Lord's headquarters, on June 30 the governing body told both the ZCU and the players they had 14 days to agree to their three-man arbitration system.

In its statement the ICC said that while the ZCU had now agreed, the players were asking for an extra month to make up their minds.

However, the statement made clear that officials were not prepared to wait much longer.

"The ICC has advised the players of its strong preference to have this matter dealt with as quickly as possible and has expressed its reluctance to provide this extension which would leave these matters unresolved," the statement said.

"It has now asked the players to fast-track their decision on whether they will agree to this proposal to allow the matter to move to the next

stage."

The bulk of the rebels are currently in England where on Wednesday they were playing the first match of a six-game charity tour designed to raise money for the Zimbabwean Cricketers Fund and the Zimbabwe Pensioners Fund.

Test batsman Stuart Carlisle, captain of the Red Lions, as the team is known, warned earlier Wednesday: "It would be difficult to resume a working relationship with the ZCU because they have done so much damage and that's why the solution to the dispute has to be effective."

"Some of the individuals in the ZCU that have helped cause the problems have to be booted out of cricket completely. The cancer must be cleansed. If that happens then I'm sure we can work together."

The ICC, at the same board meeting that devised the tribunal system, suspended Zimbabwe's Tests for the rest of the year following heavy defeats against Sri Lanka.

However their one-day internationals remained intact and England are due to play five such games in Zimbabwe in November.

WI take good lead

Cricket

AFP, Arundel

England fast bowler Matthew Hoggard produced a heartening display ahead of next week's first Test against the West Indies with a flurry of wickets for MCC as the tourists faltered on the second day of three here Wednesday.

At stumps the West Indies were 115 for five in their second innings, a lead of 235 after they had lost five wickets for 50 runs.

Opener Chris Gayle was 60 not out with his captain Brian Lara, who made 113 in the first innings before retiring hurt with flu, unbeaten on 34.

Earlier West Indies, who resumed on 373 for six, were bowled out for 380 in their first innings with Yorkshire quick Hoggard taking four for 32.

After MCC made 260 in reply, Middlesex opener Sven Koenig top-scoring with 79, Hoggard struck again with a burst of three for 42.

Both innings saw Hoggard take two wickets in two balls.

A member of the pace attack that helped England to a 3-0 Test series win in the Caribbean earlier this year, Hoggard had been doubtful for this match and the Tests that follow with a right knee injury.

But the 27-year-old swing bowler showed few ill effects on a day when 18 wickets fell in total.

By contrast, West Indies pace bowlers Fidel Edwards and Pedro Collins, who only flew into England on Friday to join up with the one-day squad that lost last weekend's NatWest Series final against New Zealand, had a far tougher day.

The duo returned combined figures of none for 115 from 22 overs.

Lara's men only have one more warm-up match, a three-day game against Sri Lanka A at Shenley starting Saturday, before the Test series gets underway on July 22.

But first change Jermaine Lawson, whose two for 38 included England middle-order veteran Graham Thorpe and medium-

pacer Dwayne Smith, with a late burst of three for four, gave West Indies a first innings lead of 120.

A cold day and sluggish wicket made life far from ideal for the tourists who then saw their batsmen struggle against a moving ball.

Earlier Hoggard and fellow England fast bowler Simon Jones claimed the tourists' final three first innings wickets in the space of nine balls.

First Jones's full length delivery had Collins lbw for two.

Then Hoggard, with the second new ball struck with the fifth and sixth deliveries of his opening over.

Omari Banks (16) edged a delivery and Thorpe took a superb catch away to his right at second slip. Then new batsman Lawson saw his off stump knocked out of the ground.

Hoggard repeated the trick before the close when first innings centurion Devon Smith (three) was caught at mid-wicket for three by Koenig before Dwayne Smith fell lbw for naught.

Blignaut in for Akhtar

AFP, London

Zimbabwean all-rounder Andy Blignaut on Thursday joined English county side Durham on a one-month contract, the club said.

Blignaut, 25, one of 15 white rebel Zimbabwean players stood down by the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU), effectively replaces paceman Shoaib Akhtar, who is on international duty with Pakistan in the Asia Cup.

Blignaut had played 15 Tests and 47 one-day internationals before the rebels' dispute with the Zimbabwe Cricket Union began.

BKSP reunion on Sept 10

SPORTS REPORTER

The Alumni Association of BKSP (AAB) has fixed September 10, 2004 as the date for the yearly reunion of former students of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Pratisthan.

To prepare for the programme, a special meeting has been convened at the gymnasium of Dhaka University on Friday, July 23 at 3:30pm. All ex-students of the BKSP are welcome to attend the meeting. For more information, interested persons can call the following mobile phone numbers: 0171845012, 0171465378, 0175008912 and 0171456292.

Thorpe awaits tougher WI

BBC ONLINE, undated

Graham Thorpe has predicted a "hard series" against West Indies despite England's 3-0 triumph in the Caribbean just three months ago.

The England squad for the first Test at Lord's will be announced on Sunday.

But Thorpe, Matthew Hoggard and Simon Jones have already faced the tourists by playing against them for the MCC.

"This is not a Test so there is not the same intensity level, but you still want to perform and play some positive cricket," said Thorpe.

"It is also beneficial to have another look at the West Indies before we meet them again at Lord's next week."

"We are well aware it will be a hard series and it is good to have some early sparring against them."

Thorpe's innings was caught short by Jernaine Lawson on the second day at Arundel -- the one member of the likely West Indies Test attack who did not play in the series in the Caribbean.

He looked far happier than teammates Fidel Edwards and Pedro Collins, having had time to acclimatise during the one-day NatWest Series.

"I feel okay running in and in the longer version of the game you can relax more," said Lawson.

"In a one-day situation you are under pressure all of the time and you have to be thinking right through the game."

"In a three-day game like this, or a Test series, you have more time to relax and regroup again."

"I feel I am getting there with my pace as well. I have been trying to push my speed. I really felt good."

Get Sachin

FROM PAGE 13

"Of course I am overawed at the prospect of playing against the likes of Tendulkar," said UAE captain Khurram Khan.

"I don't know how the match will go. I just hope I can enjoy the moment."

Khurram said an UAE official had promised 1,000 dollars to the bowler who claimed the wicket of Tendulkar, one-day cricket's most successful batsman, before their departure from Dubai.

"But I don't think anyone would want to take that wicket for money considerations alone," he said.

"It would be a prize wicket like no other."

Officials told the team, comprising home-grown talent along with young expatriates from India and Pakistan, to be inspired by Greece's success at football's Euro 2004.

"If Greece could do it, anyone can, we were told," Khurram said. "That's what sport is all about."

Coach Abid Ali, a former Indian Test all-rounder, extolled his boys to give off their best on Friday.

"Winning and losing is part of the game," Abid said.

"The players will learn more about cricket in one week than they have done so far."

"It is easy for me to say the team should not be overawed by the occasion. They are bound to be nervous. But as long as they stick to the basics I will be happy."

On Saturday, the UAE will face Sri Lanka's star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, Test cricket's joint record-holder along with Australian Shane Warne.

Both UAE and Hong Kong are expected to bow out after the first round, leaving India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to contest the super league.

Edwards faces Olympic ban

AFP, Paris



World 100m champion Torri Edwards failed a drugs test for a banned stimulant in April, the International Association of Athletics Federation said Thursday.

Edwards faces an Olympic ban after qualifying at the United States Olympic Trials in Sacramento this week by finishing second behind LaTasha Colander.

The 27-year-old failed the drugs test for nikethamide, a former barbiturate overdose treatment drug, at a meeting in Martinique on April 24.

Penalties for the use of a stimulant range from a public warning and loss of results to a two-year ban. She was to face a US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) hearing next Monday.

Edwards took the 2003 World Championship gold medal after finishing behind compatriot Kelli White who was later stripped of the 100m and 200m titles after she admitted using performance-enhancing drugs.

Edwards also moved from third to second in the world 200m when White lost her gold medal in that event.

If Edwards is banned then 37-year-old former world and Olympic champion Gail Devers will move up from fourth in the US trials to third, behind Lauryn Williams, for the remaining US spot in Athens.

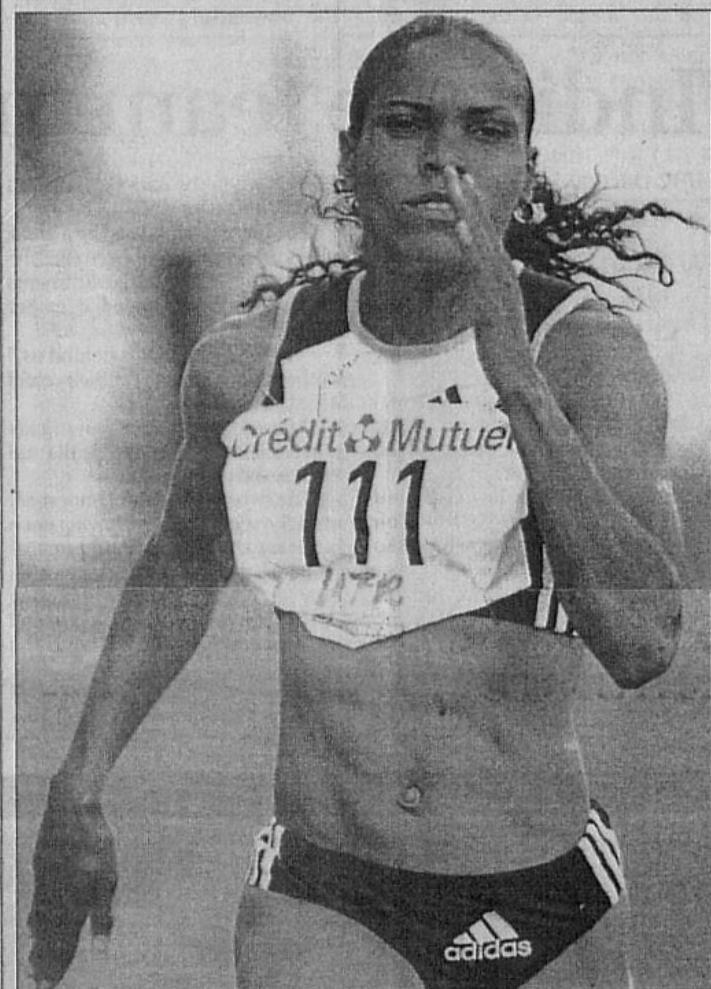
Reigning 100m Olympic champion Marion Jones was fifth in the US trials, missing out on her chance to defend her crown in Athens.

American athletics has been thrown into disarray by investigations into drug-trafficking by a San Francisco laboratory run by Victor Conte.

Sydney Olympic five-medal hero Jones is under doping suspicion and well shy of her best efforts, having failed to qualify to defend her 100m title with chances yet to come in the long jump and 200m.

Tim Montgomery, the world 100m record-holder, is among four athletes fighting a possible lifetime doping ban.

Montgomery, Olympic 400m silver medalist Alvin Harrison, former world indoor 200m champion Michelle Collins and former Olympic relay medalist Chrystie Gaines have been charged by USADA with doping offences.



TORRI EDWARDS

Rusedski prevails

Tennis

AFP, Los Angeles

Hard-serving Greg Rusedski rallied from a first set loss to beat Karol Beck 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 at the 380,000 ATP Mercedes-Benz Cup on Wednesday for his seventh victory in a row.

Briton's No. 2 built on his title-winning form from last week at Newport using his serve and volley game to stymie Beck.

The unseeded Rusedski made a smooth transition from Newport grass to hard court, blasting 16 aces on Wednesday.

"I am starting to build more confidence, especially in tight situations and on break points," Rusedski said.

This is the first time in two years he has won seven consecutive matches.

"When I was near the top of my game in 1997 and 1998 I was winning all my tiebreakers. It is nice to get that feeling back," he said.

Rusedski didn't look sharp in the first set but recovered to take the second easily and won the deciding set in a tiebreaker. It was his eighth straight win in a tiebreaker.

Rusedski was down 4-3 in the eighth game of third set when he screamed at an excited fan who was cheering every time one of Rusedski's shots would sail long or land in the net.

The last time Rusedski lost his temper in the middle of match was that infamous day on centre court at the 2003 Wimbledon.

But there is no comparing the two

Three match spitting ban for Frey

AFP, Nyon

Switzerland striker Alexander Frei has been suspended for three international matches after he was accused of spitting at England's Steven Gerrard during a Euro 2004 tie, UEFA said Thursday.

UEFA's Appeals Body said in a statement that it had only "partially upheld" the appeal by European football's governing body against the 25-year-old after examining video evidence and testimony from witnesses.

UEFA officials were understood to have been seeking a five-match ban.

Frei, a lynchpin in Switzerland's forward line-up, will miss the side's first 2006 World Cup qualifying matches against the Faroe Islands on August 31, and at home to Ireland on September 8.

He was withdrawn from Switzerland's last Euro 2004 match against France on June 21 in controversial circumstances after he had been cleared by UEFA's disciplinary body of spitting during the earlier match against England.

UEFA appealed against the original ruling when it received new Swiss television video which appeared to confirm the incident.

"Taking into account all the circumstances the Appeals Body considered a three match ban appropriate," the statement said.

Razzak ready

FROM PAGE 13

believes that there is still room for improvement.

"It's always nice to win. The second one was a very good win for us."

Defending the decision to come to Sri Lanka 15 days ahead of the tournament, Whatmore said: "The decision was correct. We got some valuable opportunity to practice on turf and in local conditions. Only one day was washed out, it happened to be a practice match. That was unfortunate, it rained and rained all day, but everything else that we planned was achieved. So it was useful."

Captain Habibul Bashar also echoed the sentiment.

"We missed outdoor training in Dhaka but we got the opportunity to do that here. We did not find the turf here really prepared, but playing those two matches really helped," Bashar told.

"The ball will swing on this SSC wicket in the morning. It would be bowling first in normal condition. "We recovered from difficult conditions in both practice matches. Ashraf played a brilliant innings in the first with adequate support from Faisal."

TIGERS SQUAD

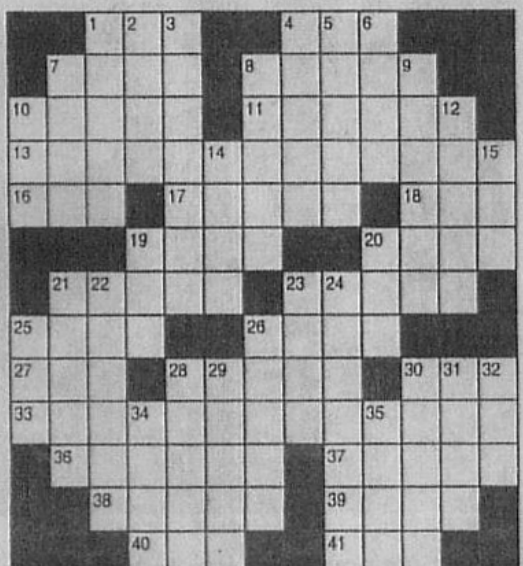
Javed Omar, Mohammad Ashraf, Habibul Bashar, Rajin Saleh, Alok Kapali, Mushfiqur Rahman, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Khaled Mahmud, Abdur Razzak and Tapash Baisya.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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ICC B J X X Q G Q X I Q R F J
RCPEV PXJ DL DEI Q I P V J

D V M P X I G I L I .
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A COARSE PERSON
IS UNRULY AT A SOCIAL GATHERING, IS HE THE
STRIKE OF THE PARTY?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: X 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.

India the team

FROM PAGE 13

Sri Lanka have home advantage but could be at a disadvantage coming straight to the competition from a Test series down under.

Their players, Muralitharan apart, have had precious little time to readjust to the demands of the one-day game ahead of Saturday's match against the UAE.

The two minnows in the competition have nothing to lose, with Hong Kong relishing the opportunity to play in a major tournament for the first time.

They are coached by Robin Singh, who played 136 one-day internationals for India, the last as recently as 2001.

He believes they have a half a chance against Bangladesh, who have only won once in the last five years.

"Playing cricket for your country, be it your country of adoption, is a big thing," said skipper Rahul Sharma.

Their 14-man squad includes there are seven Pakistani-born players, two Indians, a Nepalese national, two British, one Australian and one Chinese.

The UAE won three of their five matches at the ICC Six Nations Challenge earlier this year and are relatively strong in batting with a line-up headed by Syed Maqsood, Khuram Khan and Asim Saeed.