

## SL remain unchanged

REUTERS, Galle

Sri Lanka announced an unchanged 15-man squad for the second Test against South Africa which starts in Colombo on August 11.

**SQUAD:** Marvan Atapattu (Captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chaminda Vaas, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Muttiah Muralitharan, Nuwan Zoysa, Thilan Samaraweera, Rangana Herath, Romesh Kaluwantharana, Upul Chandana, Ian Daniel.

## Pittman still hopeful

AFP, Athens

World 400 metres hurdles champion Jana Pittman says she is still hopeful of making this month's Athens Olympics after undergoing emergency knee surgery in London.

Australia's best hope for an athletics gold medal, Pittman was diagnosed with a torn cartilage after injuring herself during the warm-up at a meeting in Zurich on Friday.

Australian Olympic Committee vice-president Peter Montgomery told a news conference in Athens that Pittman had come through arthroscopic surgery well and "there was still hope she would participate".

Speaking outside a hospital in London, Pittman told reporters: "I have been given a bit more of chance than I originally gave myself."

"The doctors certainly have not ruled out the possibility of me running in Athens," she said on Sunday, leaning on crutches. "I have healed very quickly in the past. Any chance is a chance."

Her event heats start on August 21, leaving her less than two weeks to recover as she has two days before her first race to confirm her entry.

"We will give her the absolute maximum opportunity to be able to compete," said Montgomery.

The 21-year-old landed awkwardly after clearing a hurdle and was taken to hospital for scans where she was diagnosed with a "complicated tear".

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## 'A great result'

## Cricket

REUTERS, Galle

South Africa captain Graeme Smith believes his team will take a psychological advantage over Sri Lanka into this week's second Test after escaping with a draw in the series opener on Sunday.

Sri Lanka had been widely expected to go 1-0 up in the two-match series by bowling on a crumbling fifth-day pitch, but South Africa's top order defied the home spinners, batting out the day to finish on 203 for three.

"Two months ago, people must have been questioning whether the match was going to last five days, or whether we would be able to bat out the final day," Smith told reporters.

"This is a huge, positive step for us," he added.

"We played some serious cricket and go to Colombo with more confidence than Sri Lanka.

"We have got a few things we can

improve on but, at the moment, they (Sri Lanka) are asking more questions than we are. I am really proud, though, of the way the guys have performed."

Smith led from the front on the last day, shrugging aside ill-health to make his team's top score of 74.

"I suffered a bit today," he said.

"I lost five kilos in the first session, but I am getting stronger. Hopefully by the next Test match I will be alright," he said.

Sri Lanka captain Marvan Atapattu gave credit to the discipline shown by South Africa's batsmen.

"I thought they worked to a plan and they achieved that," he said.

However, Atapattu was surprised the pitch did not offer more assistance to his bowlers on the final day.

Muralitharan pulled out of the recent two-Test series in Australia after controversy concerning his bowling action.

"The authorities have asked him to stop bowling one of his key weapons and he has to readjust his bowling pattern and thinking," Atapattu added.

## Tickets start selling

AFP, Athens



After a snail's pace start, Olympic ticket sales on Sunday put on a burst of speed into the final straight before the Games open, as long lines of would-be spectators waited outside ticket booths in Athens to make a last-minute purchase.

"I decided to go watch the Games, but, just like Greeks do, I'm buying them at the last minute," said Costas Hamos, a middle-aged transport company owner from Athens, one of around 100 Greeks who lined up in front of a ticket sales booth in central Athens.

"I have already bought a few tickets and I'm back for more," said Panayiotis Pavlakis, another Athenian standing in line.

Since Monday, Games organisers

ATHOC have been announcing new daily ticket sales records every 24 hours. More than 54,000 tickets were sold on

Friday, a huge rise from the 4,500 that were sold daily in June.

The last-minute surge has helped to dispel fears that the Games could take place in half-empty stadiums. Only 2.2 million out of a total 5.3 million tickets

had been sold by August 3, 10 days

before the Games' opening ceremony.

Between the middle of May and mid-June, tickets could be booked online and then either picked up at ticket booths when they opened or be sent to the purchasers' homes. But computer-shy Greeks shunned that option.

The country's biggest medal hope is 2000 Olympic champion over 200 metres, Costas Kenteris.

"I want athletics tickets. If they tell me there are only some for 200 euros left, I'll buy them," said engineer Andreas Charalambopoulos he waited online.

Others were waiting for what Greeks consider more esoteric sports.

"I came to buy baseball tickets. They're not expensive and baseball is such a strange sport -- I just want to see what it looks like," Pavlakis said.

But Athenians anxious for a ticket still had to square off with old-fashioned Greek disorganisation.

Would-be spectators outside the booth on Korais Square were left waiting for two hours in the hot sun because sales managers had failed to inform the public that the Sunday opening time had been put back from the usual 10:00 am on weekdays to 12 noon.

"It was only yesterday that they told us we'll open on 12 Sundays and I didn't have time to change the notice," the kiosk manager apologised to the grumbling crowd.

Organisers have also begun a massive advertising campaign to boost ticket sales.

Showing footage from the Greek national football team's stunning success in this summer's European football championships, the ads urge

Off-spinner Muttiah Murali-tharan, prevented by the International Cricket Council from bowling his 'doosra' (his leg break) delivery, was unusually ineffective on the last-day pitch.

The world's most prolific wicket-taker toiled away for 20 overs, returning figures of one for 37.

"It is a bit unusual from a captain's point of view to see him (Murali) not taking the number of wickets that he normally does," Atapattu said.

"Their batters handled him pretty well, but he is playing a Test match after all.

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## Gunners lift Community Shield

AFP, Cardiff

Arsenal got their 2004/05 season off to the perfect start by reclaiming the Community Shield from Manchester United with a 3-1 victory in the traditional curtain raiser to the English football season here on Sunday.

Second half strikes from Brazilian midfielder Gilberto Silva and man-of-the-match Jose Antonio Reyes and a late own goal by Mikael Silvestre allowed the Gunners to run out comfortable winners in an entertaining match. Alan Smith pulled one back for his new club.

## B'desh to take part in Bridge Olympiad

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national team will take part in the Bridge Olympiad to be held from October 23 to November 6, 2004 in Istanbul, Turkey.

Syed Shujauddin Ahmed's team qualified for the event.

The six-member team -- Syed Shujauddin Ahmed, Nitya Gopal Saha, Khondoker Mobinul Islam, AKM Rafiqul Hossain Siddique, Md Anisul Haque and Md Hasinur Rahaman Talukder.

## Heartbreak

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wealth Games in Manchester and the SAF Games in Islamabad this year has raised expectations but the 18-year-old, a product of the BKSP, had no lofty aspirations.

"We are all enthralled by the name of Athens. I am really excited but at the same time, I have to be realistic. My current score is 590 which is ten points less than the world championship standard and it is almost impossible to close that gap and reach the last eight," said Asif.

But the teenager from Pabna is a firm believer in miracles. "I will be the happiest man on earth if I qualify for the last eight. At the moment, it is just daydreams. But this is an event where miracles can happen!" beamed Asif.

"I won the gold medal in the Commonwealth Games from nowhere even though the score was still two points less than my normal standard. But this time around it will be extremely difficult to overcome the deficit," said Asif.

"I am now trying to adjust to the new technique I have learnt during my 49-day stint in Germany. I have some basic flaws. That's why I will be happy if I maintain my standard 590 points with the new technique," said Asif.

For swimmer Dolly Akhter, it will be her second Olympics but she was desperately looking forward to make amends for a nightmarish introduction to the Games four years ago in Sydney.

"I got disqualified from the trials for a false start. I don't want to make the same mistake again. I had trained in Thailand and China recently which I believe has helped me improve," said the diminutive swimmer who will compete in the 100 metre breaststroke.

Palios and Gibson have both resigned in the fallout from the scandal, while Eriksson has survived. The FA board ruled on Thursday that he has no case to answer.

Eriksson added: "I feel sorry for Nancy. Not only does she look like a drag queen but she's latched on to someone who clearly doesn't love her.

"I vowed that I would never marry again but I was so in love with Sven that had he popped the question I

really think I would have said yes."

The couple got together, she says, at his luxury villa in Sweden. Eriksson called her and begged her to join him when England were knocked out of the tournament.

She said: "As I walked through the door of his magnificent home, he held me in his arms and gave me an incredibly passionate kiss."

Eriksson told her he wanted to see her again.

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