

Greatest Eng team Wisden excludes current players

AFP, London

England may be riding high in world cricket after winning seven successive Test matches but the country's greatest post-war team unveiled in the October edition of Wisden Cricket magazine here Wednesday contained no members of the current side.

Indeed the most recent player to make it into the star-studded line-up was Graham Gooch, who played the last of his 118 Tests in 1994.

He was chosen to open the batting alongside Len Hutton, also chosen as skipper of this team and one of seven players who made their names in the 1950s to be included.

That reflects the fact that the decade was the only one since World War II when England could have been justly regarded as the world's best team.

However, the line-up also features stars from subsequent eras such as all-rounder Ian Botham.

And the Kent duo of left-arm spinner Derek Underwood and wicketkeeper Alan Knott, two of England's key players throughout the 1970s, have also been selected.

Botham said of his inclusion: "It's a huge honour to be included in a team like this and it's nice to see some of the guys that I played with like Graham Gooch, Alan Knott and Derek Underwood receiving recognition."

Among the 25-man panel who picked the team were six England captains - Ray Illingworth, Tony Lewis, Mike Denness, Tony Greig, Geoff Boycott and Bob Willis.

In an all right-handed top order batting line-up, the selectors also found no place for elegant left-hander David Gower, while Botham and Underwood were the only bowlers from the last 35 years to be included.

The attack is led by fast bowler Fred Trueman, the first man to take 300 Test wickets and Alec Bedser, rated by Don Bradman among others as the best fast-medium bowler of all-time.

GREATEST POST WAR-TEAM

Len Hutton (Yorkshire, captain), Graham Gooch (Essex), Peter May (Surrey), Denis Compton (Middlesex), Ken Barrington (Surrey), Ian Botham (Somerset, Worcestershire and Durham), Alan Knott (Kent, wkt) Jim Laker (Surrey), Fred Trueman (Yorkshire), Alec Bedser (Surrey), Derek Underwood (Kent).

Win or nothing

Qatar were coming off a 1-0 win over Iraq but could not find a way past their South Asian opponents in the opening half.

It was a different story in the second half though as the Qataris put their gallant opponents to the sword. Striker Ali Hassan Afef finally broke the stubborn Bangladeshi resistance with Qatar's opening goal on 56 minutes before Marzouq Juma put his side ahead shortly afterwards.

The floodgates opened thereafter with Khalaf Ibrahim scoring in the 71st minute before Afef netted his second goal of the game four minutes later. Yusef Ahmad Ali then got into the act with two late goals to secure a big win for the Gulf side.

Meanwhile, Iraq scored three times in the final 23 minutes to beat Uzbekistan 4-1 as they recovered from their earlier defeat to Qatar to move into second place in Group D.

Iraq should advance to the last eight if they manage a draw against Bangladesh.

GROUP D

Table with 5 columns: Team, Played, Won, Drawn, Lost, Goal For, Goals Against, Points. Rows for Qatar, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh.



PHOTO: AFP

I'VE DONE IT: American Jennifer Capriati celebrates her fourth round win over compatriot Serena Williams at the US Open in New York on Tuesday.

Murali snub surprises SL



REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka cricket officials have expressed "surprise and disappointment" that off spinner Muttiah Muralitharan missed out at the inaugural International Cricket Council (ICC) awards on Tuesday.

Muralitharan, Test cricket's highest wicket-taker, was nominated for all three major award categories after a prolific year in which he had taken 68 wickets in eight Tests against England, Australia and Zimbabwe.

A 50-member voting academy, comprising national captains, umpires, match referees, former players and media representatives, picked India batsman Rahul Dravid as the Cricketer of the Year and Test Player of the Year.

"We are definitely surprised and all obviously disappointed as Murali

was the leading wicket-taker in Test cricket during this period, but it is the people who vote that matter in the end," Sri Lanka Cricket president Mohan de Silva told Reuters.

Despite being one of only five players nominated for all three main categories, Muralitharan was then omitted from the World Test XI which was selected by a five-man panel chaired by Richie Benaud.

Australia wrist spinner Shane Warne was included as the specialist spin bowler in the team.

"Murali should definitely have been in the World Test XI after his wicket haul during the year - I am very surprised," de Silva added.

"But Murali is a tough competitor and I have no doubt that, when he comes back from injury, he will keep taking wickets and will one day get the recognition he deserves."

Muralitharan, who has taken 532 Test wickets, five more than Australian Warne, will miss this month's ICC Champions Trophy in

England after having shoulder surgery last month.

The 32-year-old is not expected to return to international cricket until Sri Lanka's tour to New Zealand starting in December.

Muralitharan has been dogged by a 'throwing' controversy with his doosra, a special delivery that spins in the opposite direction to his off break, having been reported as suspect in March and later judged to exceed the ICC's tolerance levels.

The Sri Lankan, who bowls with a locked-elbow and a super-flexible wrist, has maintained his doosra as a fair delivery.

He has argued, with support from leading scientists, that current tolerance thresholds for spin bowlers must be reviewed.

The ICC has acknowledged further research is required into the biomechanics of spin bowling and that the current regulations will be reviewed immediately after the Champions Trophy.

Ashes warning from McGrath

BBC ONLINE, undated

Australian fast bowler Glenn McGrath has warned England about over-confidence ahead of next summer's Ashes series.

England have improved hugely over the last year but McGrath insists that Australia still hold the upper hand.

"Everywhere I go, people are asking me if England can win the Ashes and it is still a year away," he said. "I've said we could win 4-0, unless we get a bit of rain, in which case it might be 3-0. But it might be back to 5-0 by next summer."

McGrath also told the Guardian newspaper that England should concentrate on the winter tour to South Africa and not on next summer's events.

"The series in South Africa is a big one for England and you should be focussing on that, not the Ashes. England are the improving team in world cricket but we have improved since the last Ashes tour."

"Me and Brett Lee have got over major injury problems and Shane Warne's 12 months off have done him the world of good."

England have not won an Ashes series since Mike Gatting's team triumphed down under in 1986-87.

When the teams last met in Australia two winters ago, the home side won the first four Tests before England gained a consolation victory in the final game in Sydney.

Group C: Band of underachievers

REUTERS, London

South Africa arrived for the ICC Champions Trophy on the back of a 5-0 defeat in Sri Lanka while West Indies are low on confidence after a Test whitewash to England.

They meet on September 18 at The Oval after both playing Bangladesh, who have won just five of their 93 matches since their first official one-day international game in 1986.

South Africa opener Herschelle Gibbs endured a torrid time with the bat in Sri Lanka but his captain Graeme Smith has laid the blame on the whole team.

"The basics let us down. The guys have had a hard look at themselves and are ready to bounce back," he said. "In crunch moments of a game we have got to be more ruthless."

West Indies reached the final of the triangular series with New Zealand and England in July and look a much more cogent side in one-dayers than in Tests.

Brian Lara vowed after the 4-0 Test drubbing to England that he would stay on as captain until at least after this tournament and with youngsters coming through like impressive 20-year-old all rounder Dwayne Bravo, they may surprise a few people.

"We are looking forward to the tournament. We are fit and raring to go," said Bravo. "We know South Africa at this point in time are not playing great cricket and we have to take full advantage."

GROUP B GAME

Sept 12: SA v Ban, Edgbaston Sept 15: WI v Ban, Rose Bowl Sept 18: SA v WI, The Oval

A fight

September 19, which is made all the more gripping by its sudden death nature if they both dispatch Kenya as expected.

On current form the player of the tournament should be England's Andrew Flintoff, who has been in outstanding touch with bat and ball in both of forms of the game.

He averages only 35 in one-day cricket after an indifferent start to his career but has a strike rate of over 90 with the bat and an economy rate with the ball of just over four.

South Africa need a recovery from their Sri Lanka tour with captain Graeme Smith aware they are not the force they were after losing a record-equalling 10 one-dayers.

"We have a lot to prove as we have not had the best of starts to our season," he said. "In a way we are big underdogs."

South Africa's problems do not compare with the plight of neighbours Zimbabwe, who have been suspended from playing Tests by the ICC after 15 top players refused to play citing discrimination in selection policy.

Some experience remains and young wicketkeeper and captain Tendulkar is mature beyond his years, but most of the squad is untried.

Bangladesh will be spying a shock victory on September 15 against an ill-disciplined West Indies side, who nonetheless have been performing much better in one-dayers than Tests.

"From the team's point of view it has been a disappointing year but we have the opportunity to bounce back," West Indies vice-captain Ramnaresh Sarwan said.

The ICC is using the tournament to trial the use of third umpires in checking for no balls and will also be reviewing slow bowling actions.

England's advantage



REUTERS, London

England and Sri Lanka will eye a possible Champions Trophy semifinal against Australia as they battle for top spot in Group D with a Zimbabwe side that has had its spine ripped out by internal politics.

England and Zimbabwe begin the 16-day competition on Friday at Edgbaston with the home side buoyed by Andrew Flintoff's return after he missed the defeat to India at Lord's last Sunday to see the birth of his daughter.

The inspirational all rounder has been in fantastic touch in the last year having matured from a slogger into one of the world's best even if England's one-day form has been indifferent with three wins in the last eight completed games.

Opener Marcus Trescothick is always capable of a powerful innings, however, and fast bowler Steve Harmison has begun to translate his

excellent Test form into the one-day arena.

"I feel now I am getting into the groove of one-day games," he said, although he is well aware that Flintoff remains England's match winner, especially now he is a father.



MUTTHIAH MURALITHARAN ... absent

"It gives you a spring in your step," Harmison added. Sri Lanka face Zimbabwe on September 14 at The Oval on the back

of a stunning 5-0 home rout of South Africa even without spin bowler Muttiah Muralitharan.

Seam bowlers Chaminda Vaas and Nuwan Zoysa will enjoy the bouncy Oval wicket and with the experienced Sanath Jayasuriya still scoring freely they will also be confident of beating England as they bid to regain the title they shared with India in 2002.

Zimbabwe will just be glad to be competing internationally, albeit only in the shortened form of the game after being suspended from Tests for fielding a side weakened by the boycott of 15 players over allegations of discrimination.

The team that is left contains few established names though wicketkeeper Tendulkar, the youngest captain in the tournament, has shown maturity that belies his 21 years.

GROUP D GAME Sept 10: Eng v Zim, Edgbaston Sept 14: SL v Zim, The Oval Sept 17: SL v Eng, Rose Bowl

The Champions squads



REUTERS, London

Collated list of squads competing in the ICC Champions Trophy taking place in England, which starts on Friday September 10:

AUSTRALIA: Ricky Ponting, Adam Gilchrist, Michael Clarke, Jason Gillespie, Ian Harvey, Matthew Hayden, Brad Hogg, Michael Kasprovic, Brett Lee, Darren Lehmann, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Andrew Symonds, Shane Watson.

BANGLADESH: Rajin Saleh, Mohammad Ashraf, Javed Omar, Nafees Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed, Mushfiqur Rahman, Khaled Mahmud, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Manjural Islam, Tapash Baisya, Tareq Aziz, Nazmul Hossain, Faisal Hossain -- added on August 24.

ENGLAND: Michael Vaughan, James Anderson, Gareth Batty, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Stephen Harmison, Geraint Jones, Anthony McGrath, Vikram Solanki, Andrew Strauss, Marcus Trescothick, Alex Wharf.

INDIA: Virender Sehwag,

added on September 4.

SRI LANKA: Marvan Atapattu, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chaminda Vaas, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Zoysa, Dilhara Fernando, Saman Jayantha, Avishka Gunawardene, Upek Chandana, Kaushal Lokurachchi -- added on August 26.

USA: Richard Staple, Nasir Javed, Charles Reid, Howard Johnson, Ajiz Ali, Mark Johnson, Leon Romero, Naseer Islam, Rohan Alexander, Rashid Zia, Steve Massiah, Clayton Lambert, Donovan Blake, Jignesh Desai.

WEST INDIES: Ian Bradshaw, Dwayne Bravo, Courtney Browne, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Corey Collymore, Mervyn Dillon, Chris Gayle, Wavell Hinds, Sylvester Joseph, Brian Lara, Ricardo Powell, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Darren Sammy -- added on August 26, Ryan Hinds -- added on September 2.

ZIMBABWE: Tendulkar, Dion Ebrahim, Brendan Taylor, Mark Vermeulen, Alester Maregwede, Vusi Sibanda, Stuart Mutekenyeri, Kawanda Mupariwa, Mluleki Nkala, Tinashwe Panyangara, Douglas Hondo, Edward Rainsford, Elton Chigumbura, Prosper Utseya.

Showdown of master minds

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League trophy earlier in the season.

Brothers' 2-1 comeback victory over an inspired Abahani in the semifinal will definitely give them extra confidence but Naimuddin has told his players to treat the final as a totally new ball game.

"I have told the boys that it's a new day and they can not take anything for granted. They have to forget whatever has happened in the whole season and will have to work hard to lay their hands on the trophy," said Naimuddin yesterday during the team's training session at the club's ground.

Brothers boast as many as 11 current national players and have plenty of decisive booters but Naimuddin thinks that they will face a team that is technically very sound.

"As opponents, Mukhtijodha are difficult as they stick to a plan. That can be dangerous. But I feel that our players will be on top, especially

after the moral boosting win against Abahani two days ago. I think it will keep them focused on completing a double. It will be a great achievement if we can win tomorrow," he added.

When asked about Brothers' 4-2 victory against the Reds in a Super Six match earlier in the tournament, Naimuddin said it will have no bearing in the final. "They did not have key players that day and it will be a different game."

Manik, the long serving Mukhtijodha coach also thinks that the loss against Brothers, which was their only defeat in the campaign so far, is already forgotten.

"We have recovered from that. With top local players, Brothers are the best team and there is no doubt they will be inspired to finish this tournament as number one. But we are looking forward to the final too because we are the defending champions," said Manik.

A strong defence and the coun-

try's best goalkeeper Aminul under the bar gives Mukhtijodha the right tools to stymie Brothers' attacking flair but Manik said that a win could become a difficult proposition if his players took time to settle down as a team.

The former Bangladesh fullback also said that it will be a personal challenge also.

"Naimuddin has had vast experience and has top level experience. If I can outwit him, it will be very pleasing for me."

Manik's main concerns are an inadequate reserve bench and the absence of inform marksmen to partner striker Saifur Rahman Moni who is jointly leading the score sheet with seven goals.

On the other hand, Brothers' main striker and captain Alfaz is fast approaching his lethal best. Topu, Abul, Monwar and Arman all have been among the goals also.

Second sister ousted too

FROM PAGE 13

and controversial, finale against her fellow American.

In the opening game of the third set, Williams served at deuce and hit a backhand winner inside the line which was correctly called good by the line judge, only for Portuguese umpire Mariana Alves to call "advantage Capriati".

Williams' disbelief turned to fury as she argued at the umpire's chair, but to no avail as Capriati broke serve. Williams broke back to level at 1-1, only to surrender serve again in the next game.

Capriati moved 5-4 ahead to serve for the match but was given another let-off at 0-15 when a Williams pass was again called out despite appearing to hit the line.

To her credit Williams kept her cool and fought ferociously to stay in the quarterfinal, saving two match points before a netted backhand ended the contest.

"She came out firing and I started tight but I just tried to stay with her," Capriati told reporters after clinching a place in the semifinals for the fourth time.

"I just didn't want to let it slip away. It shows how good life is, you keep getting chance, after chance, after chance. I can't stop this now."

Williams said she had received an apology from tournament officials, before adding: "She (the

umpire) must have gone temporarily insane. I feel like I've been cheated. I'm very upset and very angry."

The crowd was still buzzing when Roddick walked out for his fourth-round match.

The American, who blitzed his way through the first three rounds without dropping a set, turned on the power once again to demolish 18th seed Robredo.

The second seed, looking to become the first man to win back-to-back titles since Australian Patrick Rafter in 1997 and 1998, bashed 36 winners.

Roddick now faces big-serving Swede Joachim Johansson after the 28th seed took his ace tally for the tournament to 76 in a 6-2-6-3-6-2 defeat of Frenchman Michael Llodra.

Earlier, Frenchwoman Mauresmo's grand slam jinx struck again as she missed the chance to overhaul Justine Henin-Hardenne at the top of the world rankings.

"I want to achieve a grand slam victory, I just hope it's going to happen very soon," said Mauresmo, who can still reach number one if American Lindsay Davenport fails to win the title.

Dementieva served 15 double faults and was in obvious discomfort from her stomach upset as she dragged herself back to win a con-

test containing 14 service breaks.

The Russian, who beat Mauresmo in the quarter-finals of the French Open, showed huge mental strength to stay in touch during the second set when she was twice down a break.

By the time the third set reached the tiebreak she was often bent double between points, but she summoned up her last reserves of energy to take it 7-1.

The early action on Arthur Ashe Court was tame by comparison as 2001 champion Lleyton Hewitt cruised through to the quarter-finals, beating unseeded Slovak Karol Beck 6-4-6-2-6-2.

Fourth seed Hewitt, still to drop a set in this year's tournament, broke in the ninth game of the first set and never looked back.

"He went away a bit after I broke," said Hewitt, who will play Tommy Haas for a place in the semi-finals.

"I'm very happy with where my game is at and am ready to take it up a notch," added the former world number one.

Haas, showing signs of the form that took him to two in the world before he was sidelined by shoulder surgery, saved three set points in the opening set against teenage Czech Tomas Berdych before progressing 7-6-6-17-5.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-51 and letters QI NVQ CXTAV JZQFSQSI.

CRYPTOQUIP QI NVQ CXTAV JZQFSQSI, S R P C W C Q W T S B C A N M I P Q X Z P Q V C Q Q M F V V P B C F V X V C A P C R C W Saturday's Cryptoquip: WANT AD: 'WE ARE SEEKING A COUPLE OF GIFTED TELEPATHS. YOU KNOW WHERE TO APPLY.' Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals T 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.

TEAM AWARDS

Test team of the Year: Matthew Hayden (AUS), Herschelle Gibbs (RSA), Ricky Ponting (AUS, capt), Rahul Dravid (IND), Brian Lara (WI), Jacques Kallis (RSA), Adam Gilchrist (AUS, wkt), Chaminda Vaas (SRI), Shane Warne (AUS), Jason Gillespie (AUS), Stephen Harmison (ENG)

One-Day team of the Year: Adam Gilchrist (AUS, wkt), Sachin Tendulkar (IND), Chris Gayle (WI), Ricky Ponting (AUS, capt), Brian Lara (WI), Virender Sehwag (IND), Jacques Kallis (RSA), Andrew Flintoff (ENG), Shaun Pollock (RSA) Chaminda Vaas (SRI), Jason Gillespie (AUS)

Umpire of the Year: Simon Taufel (AUS) Spirit of Cricket: New Zealand

Invitational hockey

FROM PAGE 13 unless the AHF gives its permission. We have informed them of our wish and expecting a reply soon," said Bari.

He also informed that the BHF will bear the expenses of the foreign teams' extra stay in Dhaka.

Oman are expected in Dhaka on September 9 and they will play three warm-up matches against Bangladesh Navy, Army and BKSP. Afghanistan, Iran and Myanmar will reach by September 26.

Meanwhile, the BHF has decided to send the Bangladesh Under-17 team to the Nehru Junior Hockey tournament to be held in Delhi from October 25 to November 1.