

Hoggard's prediction

AFP, Durban

Fast bowler Matthew Hoggard believes England will comfortably win the second Test against South Africa which starts here on Sunday.

Michael Vaughan's men clinched the first Test of the five-game series by seven wickets in Port Elizabeth on Tuesday to take their winning sequence to eight Tests.

Now opening bowler Hoggard insists there is more to come from the tourists.

"I've improve by 20 per cent, like I think we will, then we'll be comfortable winners again," Hoggard told the BBC.

"Before the first Test, they said they were going to come at us hard and be in our faces, but we didn't see that."

Despite his optimism, Hoggard still believes England should not underestimate Graeme Smith's South Africans.

"We're not writing them off yet," said Hoggard.

"They're going to make some team changes and come back at us, so they will be tough to beat in Durban."

"It will be interesting to see their selection for the second Test, but we can't worry about what they are going to do, only what we are going to do."

V-Day Golf held

SPORTS REPORTER

KJ Yoon clinched the men's title while C D Hwang won the women's crown in the Victory Day Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club course yesterday.

Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury gave away prizes among the winners.

OTHER WINNERS

Senior winner: Brig Gen Jahangir Hussain; Junior winner: BS Park; Runner-up: Brig Gen SK M Mahfuzul Haque; Ladies runner-up: Mrs Shaheen Khan; 2nd Runner-up: Jang Pil Kim; 3rd Runner-up: Bong Su Park; Front Nine winner: Gp Capt Ashraf Al Azhar; Back Nine winner: Ejaz Ahmed; Best Point Per 4 Holes: Maj Gen M Kamal Uddin; Nearest to Pin: SN Khan; Longest Drive: Faisal Khan; Winner Nien Hol: Seraj Uddin Ahmed; Senior winner Nien Hol; Maj Gen M Muzammel Hussain; Runner up Nien Hol: Brig Gen M Abdur Rab.

Ponting warns

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opens for New South Wales in one-day games.

Katich said his success in batting at number three in India, where he made 259 in five innings, would help him deal with Pakistani speedster Shoaib Akhtar firing down the new ball.

"It was probably a good thing for me because it gave me a chance to get settled before the spinners came on, which is always going to be a good thing in India, so it was probably a little bit of an advantage," he said.

The left-hander said he bore no grudges from his controversial omission from the Australian Test squad that thumped New Zealand earlier this summer, when he said he was "ready to snap" over his treatment.

"I'm over all the disappointment that happened a month or so ago, and I think I've gone back to state cricket and done my best and performed reasonably well, so I think I've dealt with that... it's just nice to be back," he said.

The final decision on whether Katich will replace Langer is expected to be made Saturday.

Pakistan is yet to name a team but captain Inzamam-ul-Haq will play despite a long-term back problem.

"He'll have to play through it and we'll just try to manage him from here on, now that we know what it (the injury) is," said Woolmer.

The skipper was unable to field for part of Australia's second innings in Perth, then made a first-ball duck in the second innings, shuffling back to the pavilion in pain.

Talent runs

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way through the representative ranks for Karnataka.

Others include Jograj Yadav, whose spin bowling father Shival took over 100 Test wickets, and Pururaj Singh Rathore, the nephew of former opening batsman Chetan Chauhan.

Tendulkar's son Arjun is only five and it is far too early to tell how much of the family ability he has inherited.

"I play cricket with him and his fun. Arjun is left-handed and enjoys batting, but I have never forced him. He just likes to have a great time, playing in the mud."

"He is the age when you live without any pressure on you," he commented.

For now, the focus is on Rohan to see whether he can live with the expectations arising from being a Tendulkar.

Eng eye improvement

Cricket

AFP, Durban

England will seek to take advantage of an unsettled South African team in the second Test starting at Kingsmead Sunday.

A seven-wicket win in the first Test in Port Elizabeth gave England a significant edge in the five-match series. England went in short of match practice and lost the toss but still dominated most of the game.

England captain Michael Vaughan said he expected his team to improve. They had not played to their full potential in Port Elizabeth where some of their cricket had been "sloppy".

While England, who have won a record eight Tests in a row, have a settled team and are playing with confidence, South Africa are in a state of disarray at the end of a year in which they have plunged from second to sixth in the world Test rankings. Captain Graeme Smith bemoaned the lack of stability in South African cricket following several changes in key personnel, including a coach and convenor of selectors who are both interim appointees.

In a newspaper column Friday, Smith said: "We desperately need to share a common goal and purpose in everything from racial representation to playing style to administrative structures. As far as the team is concerned, we simply can't succeed with ever-changing views on who, and why, certain players should play ahead of others."

A squad of 14 assembled in Durban Friday with uncertainty over who would make the final

eleven. Herschelle Gibbs is likely to return to partner Smith as an opening batsman but will have to pass a fitness test after playing only one game, scoring just four runs, since suffering a right little finger ligament injury on November 17.

Another key fitness issue is whether Jacques Kallis will be able to bowl. He played as a batsman only in the first Test because of an ankle injury.

Selection convenor Haroon Lorgat said he was confident Kallis would be able to bowl but Smith was more cautious Friday, saying: "Jacques probably won't be 100 per cent by the start."

If Kallis can bowl, home town batsman Hashim Amla is likely to



MICHAEL VAUGHAN

bolster a batting order whose shortage of specialists was exposed by the disciplined England bowling attack in the first Test.

There is also expected to be debate about whether Thami Tsolekile or AB de Villiers will keep wicket. Tsolekile performed efficiently behind the stumps but De

Villiers, 20, who opened the batting in Gibbs' absence in Port Elizabeth, is rated a much better batsman with the potential to develop into a wicketkeeper-batsman in the mould of Australia's Adam Gilchrist.

Swing bowler Charl Langeveldt, a match-winner for South Africa A when they beat England in the touring team's only first-class match leading into the Test series, is expected to make his Test debut, while left-arm spinner Nicky Boje could return to the side.

Smith said his team needed to play consistently well for five days, especially when they were under pressure.

Kingsmead is one of the most pace-friendly pitches in South Africa, although preparation has been affected by recent rain, which may mean the surface is not as hard as it sometimes is. Although conditions usually favour bowlers in the first few hours, the pitch tends to flatten out, enabling batsmen to play strokes with confidence.

While South Africa's final line-up is far from certain, England are likely to retain the team that won in Port Elizabeth.

The only key player who has not made a significant contribution on the tour so far is fast bowler Steve Harmison but he is likely to relish the bounce he will get in Durban, while his rhythm is likely to improve as the tour progresses.

Coach Duncan Fletcher said England had developed a team with "mettle" and a successful formula based on hard work which led to confidence and enjoyment. He warned, though, that the return of Gibbs and Boje would make South Africa a stronger team.

ECB plans one-day changes

Cricket

AFP, London

English cricket will revamp its limited-overs set-up after next season, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced.

The ECB's move, which will see changes made to the C and G Trophy and the tatesport League one-day competition, is designed to ensure potential England players receive more one-day "exposure" ahead of an international call-up.

Since its introduction in 1963, what is now the C and G has, under various sponsors, always been a straight knock-out competition.

But from 2006, apart from the final which will still be staged at Lord's in August, the C and G will take place over the first half of the season.

Then the tatesport League, set to revert from 45 overs to the old 'Sunday League' maximum of 40 overs per side will take place.

Both competitions will feature coloured clothing and white balls

throughout as has long been the case in international one-day cricket.

In a move reminiscent of the later years of the now defunct Benson and Hedges Cup, the C and G will feature several rounds of early season limited-overs matches.

The 18 first-class counties will be divided into two 'conferences' -- north and south -- with Scotland joining the former and Ireland the latter. The winner of the northern conference will play the winner of the southern conference in the final.

The tatesport League is expected to begin in mid-July and will continue to be played in two divisions -- with games scheduled on Sundays, Bank Holidays or played flood-lit in mid-week.

Counties will play eight games -- against teams in their division either home or away.

But instead of the current three-up and three-down system of promotion and relegation, it will be two in each direction.

However, "in order to provide an appropriate end-of-season climax," the final match of the new domestic

season will be a play-off between the third-placed team in the second division and the seventh in the first to decide which county will take their place in the top flight the following campaign.

Meanwhile the County Championship, England's domestic first-class competition remains largely unchanged although in future prize money will reward the top three teams in the first division and the winners only in the second.

The Twenty20 Cup, inaugurated in 2003 and already updated for 2005, will be kept as it is too -- the ECB saying: "It is intended group matches will continue to be played in a 15-day 'window'."

But the board added it would be looking at the "potential commercial benefits of including two overseas teams in the Twenty20 Cup".

The ECB also announced their intention to "urge counties to contract players for longer periods of the year (preferably 12 months)".

And from 2006 potential Test players will get another chance to shine when England A play two first-class matches against the tourists.

Ruud out for eight weeks

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson said Thursday he will be without star striker Ruud van Nistelrooy for up to eight weeks.

The Dutch international, who has scored 12 goals so far this season to top the Old Trafford scoring chart, has been sidelined from United's last four matches and missed last Saturday's 5-2 home rout of Crystal Palace after going for a scan 24 hours earlier.

Van Nistelrooy's original calf injury has spread to his Achilles and Ferguson now hopes to have the 28-year-old goal machine back for February's first leg last 16 Champions League tie with Italian giants AC Milan.

"We have said it is a six to eight-week programme we have got for him," Ferguson told Sky Sports News on Thursday.

McGrath's bowling figures in the first Test were in stark contrast to those of the bowler he replaces, England's Steve Harmison.

A poor return of 1-142 at Port Elizabeth, where England beat South Africa in the first Test, means that Harmison has dropped 40 points and three places.

Australia's grip on the world top ten placings has been strengthened by the rise of Justin Langer to ninth place in the batting.

Michael Kasprovic has climbed to 14th in the bowling, and it is not impossible that Australia will have four batsmen and four bowlers in the PwC top tens by the end of the series against Pakistan.

Andrew Strauss of England has made his first entry into the world top 25 batsmen after two crucial innings in the first Test.

England have not had any individual who has stood out as a batting star in 2004, but all of their top six are clustered between 17th and 30th place in the batting table.

After another comfortable win against Bangladesh, India's Rahul Dravid has extended his lead at the top of the batting.

Wenger made a similar declaration 12 months ago, only to be tempted into signing Jose Antonio Reyes for what could eventually amount to a club record fee.

Posh christening!

AFP, London

Football hero David Beckham and his pregnant pop star wife Victoria Beckham played host Thursday to a glitzy, celebrity-studded christening for their two young sons.

The couple -- famous for their over-the-top lifestyle -- erected a private chapel at their "Buckingham Palace" mansion in Hertfordshire, northwest of London, just for the lavish evening ceremony.

On the guest list were England manager Sven Goran Eriksson, actress Liz Hurley, and pop star Elton John along with his partner David Furnish, who were reportedly picked as godparents to Brooklyn, 5, and Romeo, 2.

Others with invitations included David Beckham's England teammate Wayne Rooney, his former Manchester United player Gary Neville, and A-list Hollywood film star Tom Cruise.

Victoria Beckham invited Geri Halliwell, Emma Bunton, Melanie Brown and Melanie Chisholm -- the four other members of the Spice Girls, the 1990s girl band that made her famous.

The christening ought to help the Beckhams -- who enjoy near-royal status in Britain -- end 2004 on a high.

Earlier this year, David Beckham was stung when former lovers Rebecca Loos and Sarah Marbeck went public in the press about their flings with the England captain and Real Madrid star.

The Beckhams, who are expecting their third child in March, planned Thursday's ceremony down to the tiniest detail.

To get to the chapel, which has a white angel above the arched doorway, guests had to walk past fake ruins modelled on the crumbling Irish church where the couple wed.

Although Brooklyn and Romeo were having a traditional Christian ceremony, the chapel appeared to have two Buddhist shrines at its entrance, British news media reported.

MSC can't afford

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The hard-hitting batsman has already scored two centuries and missed another just for four runs.

Abahani will also look forward to stay on top as they are pitted against lowly Orient Sporting Club in another match today at the BKSP in Savar. Abahani will field a new foreign cricketer, Sri Lankan international Kumara Dharmasena.

The Lankan off-spinner replaces Pakistani batsman Tauseef Umar, who went back home to play in the Quad-e-Azam Trophy.

In the day's other match, Brothers Union will take on Indira Road Kriara Chakra at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Popov denies

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four Olympics he won four gold and five silver medals.

He also claimed six gold, four silver, and one bronze medal at the World Championships, and 21 gold, three silver and two bronze at the European Championships.

The 100m freestyle world record of 48.21 seconds he set at Monaco in 1994 lasted six years until Pieter van den Hoogenband swam 47.84 at the Sydney Games.

After becoming the first man since Johnny Weismuller in 1928 to successfully defend his 100m freestyle title at the 1996 Atlanta Games he was stabbed in the stomach in Moscow.

It was feared he would never win again but he fought back to reclaim his world title at the 1998 World Championships in Perth, although the following year he lost his first major championship when he lost to Hoogenband at the Europeans.

McGrath topples Harmison

AFP, London

Australian paceman Glenn McGrath has returned to the top of PwC Ratings for Test bowlers for the first time in two years, after his best ever Test figures of 8 for 24 against Pakistan in Perth.

McGrath's bowling figures in the first Test were in stark contrast to those of the bowler he replaces, England's Steve Harmison.

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Former Italy and AC Milan coach Arrigo Sacchi speaks at a press conference in Madrid on December 23 where he was presented as the new sports director of Real Madrid.

Ronaldo plans wedding of the year

Football

INTERNET SOURCE, Madrid

Brazilian superstar Ronaldo has confirmed the details for his forthcoming wedding to supermodel Daniella Cicarelli.

It should be quite an occasion, reported the Real Madrid website.

Real Madrid's lethal No 9 has gone to town and booked the sumptuous Chateau de Chantilly near Paris, which is widely regarded as

telle for someone of Ronaldo's estimated US\$300 million fortune.

Despite claims from the pair that they are looking for 'a simple occasion,' it is hard to reconcile this when you absorb the sheer majesty of the venue.

Furthermore, Ronaldo has called in a favour from an old pal and asked Bono, the lead singer for rock's super group, U2, to sort the music out.

Sources in Rio de Janeiro confirm that U2 will play a live set in the chateau grounds to a guest list that

Brazil after Gisele Bundchen, and her face adorns billboards everywhere you go.

The couple have only been together for about a year and Ronaldo has wasted no time in popping the question.

The couple were snapped recently in Madrid and the GQ Magazine Spanish awards, where Ronaldo picked up a Man of the Year award.

It has not been too long since his divorce from previous wife Milene Domingues, the women's



RONALDO



DANIELLA CICARELLI



BONO

one of the finest chateaus in the world.

The bash, which Ronaldo has romantically scheduled for Valentine's Day, will cost the hitman a euro or two - with the catering alone chiming in at a reported US\$2,135 per head - a mere bagatelle.

will read like a who's who of world football and Brazilian high society.

Ronaldo and Bono first met several years back when they were doing work for Unicef and have remained good friends ever since.

Daniella is perhaps the most widely recognised supermodel in

ball juggling champion with a staggering nine-hour effort of over 66,000.

She is also mother to his son, Ronald, who surely must be blessed with superb footballing pedigree. Real Madrid and Brazil must be hoping,

FLASHBACK 2004: Champions League and UEFA Cup

Surprise, surprise!

Football

AFP, Paris

Only the most perceptive of football fans could have predicted the identity of the two teams contesting this year's Champions League final.

Bookmakers would have given 'Elvis Presley-found-on-the-moon' odds on FC Porto and Monaco being the only ones left standing in the hunt for Europe's top club competition come May 26 at Gelsenkirchen in Germany.

Any thoughts that Porto without Mourinho would struggle to defend their title proved unfounded for after a shaky start they made it into the knock out stages after finishing second to Chelsea in their group in this season's event.

For Monaco qualification to the last 16 this season proved even easier as they wound up the group stages as the only side boasting maximum points.

And last season's shift in the balance of power appeared to linger as Real only made sure of their ticket to the next round on the last throw of the dice.

The Spanish giants' reward was a last 16 match-up against Juventus when the action resumes in February.

Porto and Monaco drew Inter Milan and PSV Eindhoven respectively while star billing belongs to the tie between Chelsea and Barcelona.

The UEFA Cup final proved a controversial affair with Marseille keeper Fabien Barthez red-carded in the first half against Valencia.

That foul by the former

side since Liverpool in 1977 to follow up UEFA Cup glory with success 12 months later in the Champions League.

The goals were produced by Carlos Alberto, Deco and substitute Dmitri Alenitchev.

The result ensured that Mourinho - whose subdued post-match celebrations were later put down to the death threat hanging over him and his family - left Portugal for Chelsea with the ultimate club honour on his CV.

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Manchester United keeper proved a turning point with Valencia converting the resulting spot kick awarded by Pierluigi Collina setting up a 2-0 win over France's best supported side.

"The referee ruined the party all by himself," said Barthez of his expulsion for bringing down striker Mista.

"To lose playing football is one thing, but to lose like that is very hard to accept."

The then Marseille coach Jose Anigo was more forgiving.

"It was a bit harsh but I don't want to take anything away from what we achieved by getting to this final. Even the best referees in the world have to right to some bad matches."

UEFA Cup aficionados will have been heartened by the expansion of Europe's much-maligned second club competition with 40 teams setting out on the path to the May 18 final in Lisbon back in November.

This was whittled down to 32 by Christmas with the titleholders Valencia dropping into the fray after failing to cut it in the Champions League itself.

There was the usual game of musical chairs in the transfer market this year with among others Liverpool's Michael Owen linking up with David Beckham at Real Madrid, and Ronaldinho leaving Paris Saint Germain for Barcelona - a move that was to result in the ever smiling Brazilian picking up FIFA's Footballer of the Year award.