

All Black Wilson surprisingly recalled

AFP, Wellington
The stellar career of double All Black Jeff Wilson was stunningly revived Wednesday when he was recalled to the New Zealand cricket team for the series against a World XI later this month.

As a teenager, Wilson played international cricket and rugby for New Zealand before opting to concentrate solely on rugby.

Then in May 2002, at the age of 31, he retired from all levels of rugby to return to cricket, and within three years has earned international status again.

"It's going to take me a little while to get my head around the fact I'm back on this stage again, I thought those days were gone," said Wilson who brings a star quality to a series already brimming with modern cricket greats.

"I knew if I had a strong one-day (domestic) season I'd be in the back of my mind but I was probably more realistic about next season."

His inclusion was the only surprise in the Black Caps squad for the one-day series starting on January 22, which replaces the Sri Lanka tour postponed after the devastating tsunamis swept through the Indian Ocean last month.

New Zealand coach John Bracewell said the selectors had been watching Wilson closely and have no doubt he is a dynamic cricketer.

"His match-turning ability is undoubted and we just need to see if he can step up to this level again and also see if he can perform in a travel, play, travel environment."

He comes in for injured pace bowler Ian Butler who is to undergo rehabilitation for the bulging disc in his back, resting for two weeks before making a domestic return.

Wilson last played cricket for New Zealand against Australia in 1993, striking an unbeaten 44 off 28 balls to propel his team to a final-over victory at Hamilton.

Later that year, one day before his 20th birthday, Wilson made his rugby Test debut against Scotland in Edinburgh, scoring three tries.

He played 60 Tests at wing and fullback for the All Blacks, scoring 44 tries which places him second on the all-time New Zealand Test list, two behind Christian Cullen.

SQUAD
Stephen Fleming (captain), Nathan Astle, Mathew Sinclair, Scott Styris, Hamish Marshall, Chris Cairns, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum, Jeff Wilson, Daniel Vettori, Kyle Mills, Daryl Tuffey.

Pakistan win

FROM PAGE 13
When he gets going it is very difficult to stop him.

Inzamam said the win was important after Pakistan's poor form on tour and should be a big help leading into the one-dayers.

Haddin said Pakistan had shown they had some talented one-day players but predicted the tourists would still struggle against Australia.

The tourists, however, had another good news. Injured fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar should be fit for the tri-series, Inzamam said.

Speaking after the warm-up match, he said he was confident the world's fastest bowler would be able to play.

And he said Shoaib was likely to get his eye in by playing in the first international Twenty20 match to be staged in Australia, between Pakistan and Australia A in Adelaide on Thursday.

Twenty20 matches allow for just 20 overs per side as opposed to the usual 50 overs in a normal limited-overs match.

"Hopefully he is playing tomorrow," Inzamam said. "He is fully better now and hopefully he is playing in the one-day series."

Shoaib suffered back and hamstring strains which have been treated with a series of pain-killing injections.



APPECIATION FROM PEERS: The Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh presenting a floral bouquet to Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar and his team yesterday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on winning the maiden Test.

'Australia won't write off Windies, Pakistan'

AFP, Melbourne

Rising Australian batting star Michael Clarke Wednesday played down suggestions his team would breeze through the upcoming tri-nations one-day international series here.

A potentially-depleted Australia will square-up to the West Indies in the opening match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday to kick-start the series that also features Pakistan.

In all, the teams will play each other three times before the top two meet in a best-of-three finals series.

But Clarke dismissed any suggestion that his world-champion team would breeze past two of cricket's more unpredictable sides, despite their recent 3-0 Test series win over Pakistan.

"I can only look back at the West Indies in the ICC (Champions) Trophy and they won that and they played great cricket throughout the whole tournament," Clarke said.

"I think it's going to be a great series, and Pakistan will be a real tough team to beat in the one-

dayers."
Australia may take on the West Indies missing at least two key batsmen, including Clarke, who has a mysterious foot injury, and Simon Katich, the replacement for regular opener Matthew Hayden who is being rested.

Katich has an acute throat infection which has seen him isolated from his teammates while a decision on Clarke's availability will be made on Thursday.

Scans on his injured right foot Wednesday did not reveal the source

of the soreness.

Should the pair be forced out, in-form Test opener Justin Langer, who has not been considered for one-day cricket for eight years, could be called into the side.

Hayden, the regular opening batsman for Australia in both Test and one-day cricket, has been rested by selectors for two games after appearing lethargic and out of touch.

He will not be recalled for the West Indian match, selectors said.

Other possibilities include bleeding Australia A batsman David Hussey who made a century against the West Indies in Hobart last weekend and 45 in the match against Pakistan in Adelaide on Wednesday.

Despite the setbacks, Clarke remains confident he will be fit to play.

"It feels alright at the moment, so hopefully I'll pull up alright tomorrow," he said. "I've had a few days taking it easy, staying off my feet."

The West Indies, who opened their tour in style with a four-wicket warm-up win over Australia A, including a knock of 116 from 86 balls by captain Brian Lara, will name their final selection on Friday.

maximum points at the end of the league on February 13 being declared the winner.

Star cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, who endorses the ESPN-Star Sports brand, has been featuring in advertisements promoting the PHL and even publicly placed a bet with Team India colleague Harbhajan Singh on who will win.

Tendulkar backs his home team in the Maratha Warriors to win. Harbhajan supports the Jalandhar outfit.

"Sachin's Ferrari will be mine by next month," Harbhajan joked.

Abbas, who retired from international hockey in December, is among the 10 Pakistani players featuring in the league. The other foreign players are Spanish veteran Juan Escarre and Cuban Shanmuganathan and Nor Haji Bakar from Malaysia.

Indian Hockey Federation president Kunwar Gill vowed the PHL was here to stay.

"Hockey was once our national sport but its popularity got eroded once we started faring badly on the international stage," said Gill.

"We need a tournament like the PHL to win over fans. I am certain that by the time it ends people will be hooked to hockey like they are to cricket."

India, once the masters of field hockey, have stumbled badly since winning the last of their eight Olympic gold medals at the western-boycotted Games in Moscow in 1980. They finished seventh at the Athens Olympics last August.

Gill said from next year the PHL will be played at various venues like Bombay, Madras and New Delhi once floodlights had been installed at the grounds there. He also promised to sign up more foreign players.

Prize money worth 7.1 million rupees (158,000 dollars) will be up for grabs with the winner getting 67,000 dollars and the runners-up 22,000 dollars.

For the first time in Indian hockey, players will earn tournament fees, ranging from 2,000 dollars for top stars like Abbas, Escarre and Indian captain Dilip Tirkey to 15,000 rupees (340 dollars) for the junior-most players.

Millionaire Tendulkar probably makes more in a day than what Tirkey will get for a month's efforts. But at least hockey players see a chance to start earning their dues.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: R 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.

CRYPTOQUIP
ML SP KMUUCD OEYNC MR
I Q X D W Q D U C D C K M
RXOQRC PQX WQXEK RYP
M CYN RGYDC SCYER.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT A VERY POPULAR SOAP OPERA SHOULD BE DUBBED A HOT SERIAL?

Coria survives a scare

AFP, Auckland

Top seed Guillermo Coria survived a day of carnage for seeded players at the New Zealand Open Wednesday when it took a tie-break in the final set to quell Frenchman Cyril Saulnier in their second round match.

Defending champion and No 3 seed Dominik Hrbaty and No 4 seed Vince Spadea both fell by the wayside as the tournament's lesser lights came to the fore. Second seed Tommy Roberto went out in the first round.

Going into the quarterfinals, Coria is the only seed left in the top half of the draw, while Chilean fifth seed Fernando Gonzalez and sixth seed Juan Ignacio Chela from Argentina are the only seeds remaining in the bottom half.

Coria knows he is lucky to still be in contention after he convincingly took the first against Saulnier but then struggled as the Frenchman moved up a gear to level at a set-all before Coria came back to win 6-3, 4-6, 7-7.

There were plenty of long rallies and no shortage of class from Saulnier, with Coria acknowledging it was exactly the type of match he wants in his lead-up to the Australian Open starting in Melbourne on Monday.

He plays Belgian Olivier Rochus in the quarterfinals after the world No 71 continued his impressive form with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Italian qualifier Federico Luzzi.

Rochus epitomises the battlers who plug away on the outside courts while the bigger names take up residence on centre court.

His win over Luzzi took place on the same remote territory where he removed eighth-seeded Peruvian Luis Horna in the first round.

That changes in the quarterfinals -- "finally" he quipped -- when he gets his chance on centre stage against Coria.

Another outside court regular, Czech Republic qualifier Jan Herych continued his improbable progress into the quarterfinals.

Having sent former world No 1 Juan Carlos Ferrero flying in the first round, he removed the last of the six Spaniards who started the main draw, Albert Martin 6-4, 6-2.

Veni vidi vici

FROM PAGE 13
because we were probably third or fourth on strength on paper before the start of the league," he added.

Akram was relishing the prospect of taking on Abahani in the last game which is sure to be an emotional occasion for him.

"We would like to finish the league on winning note. A loss won't matter in the next match but we would like to seal the championship with as many victories as possible," said Akram whose side's only league defeat came in their second game against last two season's champions Victoria.

It will only be the second time Akram will play against Abahani where he spent 16 years with the exception of 1990 when he led Brothers Union to league glory.

"Yes, it will be a special occasion playing against Abahani where I won so many crowns. For the last three or four years, Abahani have fielded weak teams in the league which was one of the reasons why I had left the club. I took captaining DOHS as a challenge. I am grateful to the Almighty for this success," said Akram.

In other matches of the day, Indira Road Krira Chakra upset Bangladesh Biman by 55 runs in a reduced 26-overs a-side match. Overnight rain had made the BKSP ground soggy which delayed the start. Biman crumbled to 74 all out while chasing Indira Road's 129.

In an exciting game at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Young Pegasus and Orient Sporting Club shared points following a tie. Orient reached 213-9 in 50 overs after they had bowled out Pegasus for the same.

Agassi, Federer advance
minutes on Monday when I arrived and an hour yesterday," he said.

"It was about getting used to the surface. The conditions are much quicker than Doha, my timing was OK, but I could have served better.

"All-in-all I'm happy with the match, and I won it - that's a good sign. Now I have a day off and hopefully play better the next match."

The eight-man Kooyong has been the event of choice for the top names in the sport, with eight of the last 10 champions at the Open getting their eye in here, former home of the major until 1988.

Agassi, a four-time Australian Open winner, struck a dozen aces and had 34 unforced errors on his first competitive match since last October's loss in the final of the Stockholm Open. The Chilean committed 41.

"I felt pretty good," said Agassi.

"I like the way the match played out. I was able to control points if I hit my shots. I was moving pretty well - you had to in order to react to his big forehands."

While he admitted the Open challenge was on his mind, he said he doesn't want to let it slip at Kooyong.

"For the Open, it's important that my confidence remains high. I want to play good matches here also. I haven't had much of a hit, just 45

'Warne returning to ODIs'

AFP, Sydney

Australia vice-captain Adam Gilchrist has given the best hint yet that champion leg-spinner Shane Warne may be preparing to return to one-day international cricket.

"If you've got any good money I'd suggest you get it on Warne to be back in one-day colours sooner rather than later," Gilchrist told cable television programme Inside Cricket.

"There's nothing confirmed, just a few little hints."

Warne originally announced his retirement from the one-day form of the game two years ago, citing a shoulder injury and arguing he

wanted to prolong his Test career. He had planned to stand down immediately after the 2003 World Cup in South Africa but was forced out of the tournament prematurely when he failed a drugs test.

Warne said earlier in the week he had thoroughly enjoyed his return to the international one-day arena after his successful appearance in Monday's World XI versus Asian XI charity clash in aid of tsunami victims.

He has three more fund-raising appearances in New Zealand followed by another in Calcutta next month.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting told him this week that if he was going to play all those matches and keep turning up for the Victorian state team, he may as well be playing the tri-series for Australia.

Warne himself was giving little away about his plans on Wednesday, maintaining he had retired from one-day cricket.

But he said he enjoyed the 50-overs-a-side game immensely and "down the track, who knows?"

Dent in the Adelaide final, said he felt a twinge in his hamstring during the second set of his match with Rusedski, which he won 6-4, 6-3.

"I don't know what I did, but I started to feel it a little bit and after my hit today I got more stiff."

Johansson said he wasn't concerned that the injury had cut short his Australian Open preparations, saying his five matches in Adelaide and win here over Rusedski had him fit enough for the best-of-five set matches at the grand slam.

"I've had a lot of matches and I've been in Australia for a long time now so I feel I'm playing good."

Eighth-seed Dent beat Australian compatriot Marly Fish 7-6, 6-1 and will now take on Mirnyi.

"I've spent a lot of time doing more training and I've lost a lot of body fat around my midsection so that's probably helping me move a little bit better around the court," Dent said.

Spanish fifth seed Feliciano Lopez advanced to the quarters with a 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 win over Frenchman Michael Llodra and will next play Czech Radek Stepanek who downed Russian Igor Andreev 6-3, 6-7, 6-2.

Romanian fourth seed Andrei Pavel took only two sets to oust Finland's Jarkko Nieminen, 6-4, 7-6 to set up a quarterfinal with Czech Ivo Minar, who continued his promising tournament with an easy 6-1, 6-2 win over Spaniard Fernando Verdasco.

Johansson, who put away American serve-volleyer Taylor

and Rotterdam last year and overcame Johansson in four sets on this court in the 2001 Davis Cup tie against Sweden.

Hewitt won the opening set against Clement on Wednesday, but was down a break in the second set in intense heat before clawing back to win with two consecutive service breaks.

Rising Swedish star Joachim Johansson has injury concerns ahead of next week's Australian Open after withdrawing from the Sydney International with a pulled hamstring.

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Johansson, an impressive winner of last weekend's Australian Hardcourt Championships in Adelaide, said he will travel to Melbourne later Wednesday to be assessed by a doctor to learn the full extent of his injured right hamstring.

"I pulled my hamstring muscle a little bit yesterday (in the win over Britain's Greg Rusedski)," the 22-year-old Swede said.

"I tried to go out there today and it was sore when I was practising this morning."

"I played a few games, but I felt I couldn't give 100 percent and at this level there's no way now you can win a match."

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AFP, Sydney

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Hewitt won the Sydney event in 2000, 2001 and last year but faces a potential threat in the 2002 Australian Open champion Johansson, who edged out Hewitt's Davis Cup team-mate Wayne Arthurs in two tiebreaks.

"I've got a lot of time for him (Johansson)," Hewitt said.

"He's a hell of a player and he's got all the shots. He's a great returner and for a smaller guy he's got a very big first serve and gets a lot of power out of it."

"We've had some tough matches in the past that have probably gone my way a little bit more, but I expect an extremely tough match against Thomas."

The 23-year-old Australian leads the 31st-ranked Johansson 3-0 in their meetings.

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ADAM GILCHRIST



SHANE WARNE

Hewitt on course

AFP, Sydney

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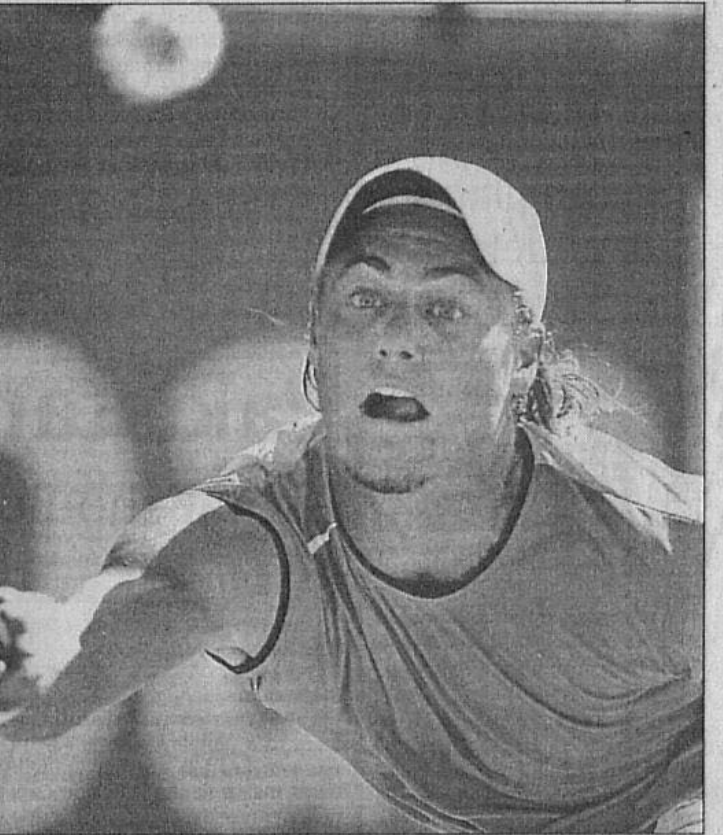
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Australian Lleyton Hewitt stretches to return the ball during a quarterfinal match against Arnaud Clement of France at the Sydney International Tennis Tournament yesterday.

Agassi, Federer advance

AFP, Melbourne

Super-fit Andre Agassi laid the groundwork for