

Lord's Tavern to dry up

Cricket AFP, London

For years it has been as much a feature for many fans of attending a match at Lord's Cricket Ground as the Pavilion, the slope of the pitch and the Father Time weather vane.

But this season spectators wanting to reflect after a day's international play in the Lord's Tavern pub will, for the most part, have to drink somewhere else.

The Tavern, which is next to the main Grace Gates entrance at Lord's has, because of its closeness to the famous north-west London venue, been the favoured watering hole of many a cricket lover as well as former and even, occasionally, current players.

But the pub has frequently become so packed with post-play drinkers, some it must be said well into their 'second innings', that customers have spilled out to the adjoining St John's Wood Road.

This has alarmed local residents, in an area that contains some of London's most expensive properties, to such an extent that Lord's owners, Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) have decided that the Tavern will no longer be open for post-match drinking on several major matchdays this season.

In a statement MCC said it would, on those specific occasions, be used instead for serving breakfasts, lunches and dinners only.

However, those fearful that, especially with the Australians over for an Ashes series, that visiting fans would not know where to go for a reviving beer or two can relax.

MCC said it intended to improve the post-match bar in the Harris Garden (behind the Allen Stand next to the Pavilion) as well as introducing, for what was tantalisingly described as a "limited post-match period", a public bar in the Tavern Banqueting Suite which overlooks the Tavern itself.

MCC deputy chief executive, David Batts said Monday: "Our new policy - which we're introducing on a trial basis - reflects the importance we attach to

local residents' views. "Although the problems have been infrequent, we readily accept that they have been intensely annoying for a small number of our neighbours."

MCC members, their guests and anyone else fortunate enough to gain access to the Lord's Pavilion can still enjoy a drink within the ground's showpiece building - provided of course that any gentlemen entering the 'holy of holies' are wearing a jacket and tie or, if a lady, they are "suitably dressed."

But the ready availability of alcohol within the Pavilion has not, over the years, prevented a stream of MCC members, some with cheeks as bright as the orange and yellow stripes on their distinctive club ties, from turning up at the Tavern.

The Tavern will be shut after stumps following the July 2 one-day triangular series final, the separate NatWest Challenge one-day on July 10 as well as after every day of the first Test against Australia starting on July 21 and the end of the domestic C and G Trophy one-day final on September 3.

However, Bangladesh's first Test in England, commencing May 21, is one of the other matches unaffected by the Tavern's new opening hours.

But given Bangladesh are not a big draw in themselves and that the sale of alcohol is banned in the Islamic country, it is easy to see why officials are not anticipating huge numbers of customers during this particular match.

Meanwhile MCC's decision not to create an additional public bar at the Nursery End, opposite the Pavilion, following talks with London's Metropolitan Police will come as no surprise to those familiar with the recent history of the 'home of cricket'.

When, in 1991, the late Denis Compton opened the stands at the rebuilt Nursery End bearing his name and that of his former Middlesex and England batting partner Bill Edrich, he was heard to remark: "They've named a stand after me and Bill and there isn't one bar in it."

India's time to payback

FROM PAGE 13 "They gave us such a grand reception and here we are trying to make trouble. This is not on," said Samir Rai, another Indian fan who went to Multan last year to watch a Test.

India is expected to issue 10,000 visas for the series.

A year of peace talks between the countries bore fruit last week when the nuclear rivals agreed to start a bus service across a ceasefire line dividing disputed Kashmir.

Cricket has always been twinned with bilateral relations: the tours became possible only after India revoked a ban on all home and away cricket with Pakistan, imposed in 2000.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since being divided along religious lines when they were freed from British rule in 1947.

Work comes to a standstill when their teams play each other, with thousands of fans thronging roadside shops to watch the match on television or listen to radio commentary.

Gunfire increases across the restive frontier in Kashmir and the expectations of millions of volatile, cricket-crazy fans put tremendous pressure on the players.

Crowd trouble has been a major issue in the past.

Pakistan beat India in an Asian Test Championship match in Kolkata in 1999 before empty stands after rioting spectators were ejected from the Eden Gardens.

A one-dayer in Karachi in 1997 was marred by spectators throwing

stones, before India returned after the interruption to complete their win. Captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth's shirt was torn by a spectator at the same venue in 1989.

Last year's tour, however, went off without a hitch. India's victories were graciously feted by Pakistanis, marking a watershed in relations between the people of the two countries.

"There were problems before, people had bitter memories of partition," said Lahore tour operator Imran Qadir. "But we're the new generation, we have no such issues with India."

"It's time to bury the hatchet."

Saqib spins BD A

FROM PAGE 13 the ninth man out.

The rest of the Bangladesh batsmen made useful contributions as they finished their second innings on 277.

Zimbabwe never looked comfortable while to set to climb a mountain and soon fell into trouble when left-arm seamer Syed Russell trapped opener Vusi Sibanda lbw for four. He struck again soon after as Terrence Duffin was bowled for 16 and the writing was on the wall for the young Zimbabweans.

The final Test will be played in Harare. The two sides will lock horns in a five-match limited-overs series afterwards.

The victory completed a delightful double for Bangladesh A, who had earlier clinched a homes series 1-0 last year.



RONALDINHO

His insatiable appetite

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

Reuters, Barcelona

Barcelona playmaker Ronaldinho has a simple but big ambition this season -- to win everything.

The 24-year-old Brazilian, instrumental in Barcelona's current success, told soccer magazine France Football he had set his sights on the Primera Liga, the Champions League, FIFA's player of the year award and France Football's own Golden Ball.

Asked what Barcelona's objectives were, he said: "Win the Champions League and the Liga. 'I'm not saying that to show off. I'm not saying it'll be easy. I'm just saying we're currently doing the right things,' he said.

Barcelona, who head the Spanish league by seven points from Real Madrid, meet Chelsea in the Champions League on Wednesday but Ronaldinho dismissed the idea that the clash was almost a final in itself.

"Barcelona are a great team. Chelsea are too. It will be a well-balanced clash. But I don't agree with the idea that it is like an early final.

"There are other teams as strong and maybe stronger than Chelsea," he said.

On a personal level, Ronaldinho said he wanted to keep the FIFA World Player of the Year award he won in 2004 and was determined to be crowned European Footballer of the Year after losing to Ukraine's Andriy Shevchenko.

"Once again I'm not showing off. I simply tell myself that if I win the two awards, it will mean Barcelona and Brazil have had a great year," he said.

Asked if he saw himself as the greatest player in the world, Ronaldinho said: "Not at all. I still have a lot to learn before I emulate my childhood's idols, Romario, Rivaldo or Ronaldo, whose footsteps I wanted to follow in Barcelona."

Waqar seeks long career

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Waqar Younis has revealed to the BBC he will help out the Pakistan side, but not just for the India series.

The former Test captain is wanted as a specialist bowling coach but he told a radio phone-in that he was holding out for a long-term contract.

Waqar told: "If it is only for the India series, it will be waste of time." Captain Inzamam-ul-Haq said: "I support Waqar. He is not a magician who can correct things in a week."

Inzamam said he wanted Waqar to teach reverse swing to his inexperienced pace cortege lacking the injured spearhead Shoaib Akhtar.

"When we had Wasim (Akram) and Waqar in the team, the new bowlers could learn a lot from them while playing with them.

"But now there is no senior bowler in the team, so we need an experienced fast bowler like Waqar as our bowling coach.

"We had many victories in the 1990s and that's all because of two guys -- Wasim and Waqar. "They taught the whole world about reverse swing -- that was our main weapon. I would like this weapon to be passed on to the juniors now."

Waqar added: "It's a loss that Shabbir Ahmed, Umar Gul and Shoaib are not fit, they would have been very effective on this tour."

Blignaut back

FROM PAGE 13 bowler last played for Zimbabwe during the February-March tour against Bangladesh last year.

Back from Tasmania where he unsuccessfully tried to forge a career, Blignaut could be rushed back into action later this week in the third and final 'A' team Test against Bangladesh.

But Blignaut, who has taken 51 Test wickets, is unlikely to join the squad currently touring South Africa.

Zimbabwe were stripped of their Test status in June after being forced to field sides weakened by the dispute. They returned to Test cricket in January in a series in Bangladesh.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ghagot Kriha Chakra beat Gorshthanpara Kriha Sangstha by five wickets in the First Division Cricket League at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Winning the toss Gorshthanpara batted first and scored 82 runs after being all out in the stipulated 34 overs.

In reply, Ghagot made 84 runs for five wickets in 23.5 overs.

National chess

FROM PAGE 13 phase along with eight other players.

FM Khondokar Aminul Islam, Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon, Hasan Imam, Mainuddin Ahmed, Aminul Islam Palash, FM Rezaul Haque, Uten and FM Abu Sufian Shakil were the other qualifiers.

Reigning champion GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Niaz Murshed, IM Abdullah Al Rakib, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib and IM Reefat Bin Sattar got direct entry in the final phase.

The number draw of the final phase will take place at the National Sports Council (NSC) conference room tomorrow (Thursday).

Bucknor to get

FROM PAGE 13 Test as an umpire was the fourth match of the series between West Indies and India in Kingston, Jamaica in April 1989.

Bucknor has stood in four consecutive World Cup finals and 131 one-dayers.

England's David Shepherd is the next most experienced Test umpire with 86 matches.

MOST TESTS FOR AN UMPIRE

Table listing umpires and their test counts: Steve Bucknor (WIS) 99, David Shepherd (ENG) 86, S Venkataraghavan (IND) 73, Dickie Bird (ENG) 66, Rudi Koertzen (RSA) 59, Darrell Hair (AUS) 58, Frank Chester (ENG) 48, Daryl Harper (AUS) 44, Dave Orchard (RSA) 44, Charlie Elliott (ENG) 42.

Diego wants documentary on his life

AFP, Belgrade

Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona has asked celebrated Balkan director Emir Kusturica to make a documentary about his colourful life, a report said Tuesday.

"It's a film which will be quite complicated in conception ... the idea being to shed some light on Maradona's constant wish to establish harmony with his family," Kusturica told the Vecernje Novosti daily.

"My intention is to find and recreate over the next five months the real personality of Maradona," said Kusturica, who has won two Golden Palm awards at the Cannes film festival for "Underground" (1995) and "When Father Was Away on Business" (1985).

The Bosnian-born director's latest full-length movie, "Life is a Miracle", was filmed in Serbia and released last year.

Shooting of the Maradona documentary is due to start in Argentina on March 18, with subsequent locations including Cuba, Italy and Spain, the report said.

PREVIEW: BARCELONA V CHELSEA Nou Camp the place to be

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Barcelona

Well-worn though the clash of the titans cliché may be in footballing terms, few would argue against its use for Barcelona's mouthwatering Champions League tussle against Chelsea on Wednesday.

Both clubs have left their rivals trailing in their wake this season in Spain's La Liga and the English Premiership, prompting some to dub Wednesday's encounter and the Stamford Bridge return as the final before the final.

Yet neither club has a creaking trophy sideboard in terms of the continent's premier club competition, Barcelona winning it just once in 1992 at Wembley while Chelsea have never captured a crown which has gone nine times to Real Madrid and been landed six times by AC Milan.

Domestically, Barca fans have grown frustrated over six seasons without a league title while for Chelsea it has been a long march of 50 years.

Now both appear poised to snatch the top prize at home - but a European Cup would look no less elegant on the sideboard.

For Chelsea, the next six days are potentially make or break after Sunday's FA Cup exit at Newcastle have turned a hunt for four trophies into a pursuit of a treble.

He noted last week that he left the Catalan capital as a mere assistant to Robson's successor Louis Van Gaal "and I go back as European champion and Chelsea boss, which is fantastic."

Mourinho broke the Champions League mould in leading unfancied Porto to last season's title, notably removing Manchester United along the way to prove that even in this day and age there is more to winning than limitless funds -- though

Should they come acropper in the Nou Camp, as they did in the quarter-finals five years ago, and then stumble against Liverpool in the League Cup final on Sunday, 'only' a Premiership title in 50 years and second in the club's history would remain in the Blues' sights.

The pressure is now full on Chelsea and their astute - some would say cocksure - Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho, who returns to the Nou Camp having served there as an assistant-cum-translator to Bobby Robson eight seasons ago.

After the Newcastle defeat, which saw defender Wayne Bridge suffer a fractured ankle the outlook for Wednesday is cloudy, with shining Dutch star Arjen Robben already sidelined - although Mourinho refuses "to think or to cry about injuries."

"We know we have injuries and we know that with some of them, we can't do anything about it," added Mourinho, adding that "we are still in a fantastic position to win the Premiership."

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he has enjoyed those too at Stamford Bridge under benefactor Roman Abramovich.

The Londoners have flashed the Abramovich cash over the past two seasons as if it were going out of fashion - making one-time big spenders Barca appear positively Scrooge-like by comparison.

The 24 million euros (30 million dollars) the Catalan club invested last summer in Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o looks like a bargain, however, given his 17 league goals.

Both Mourinho, armed with last season's triumph, and Rijkaard know more than most just what is required.

Rijkaard, a surprise choice to succeed Serbian interim coach Raddy Antic 18 months ago after Louis Van Gaal's second spell in charge came to naught, was part of the all-conquering AC Milan side of a decade ago as a classy defender.

His first few months here were a struggle but then Barca put together a tremendous run which culminated in their climbing from 12th place mid-season to runners-up by the end.

Fired by the sharpshooting of Eto'o and the midfield brilliance of Ronaldinho and Deco, Barca currently top the table by seven points from Real Madrid and a first title in six years now appears theirs to lose.

But Rijkaard says his charges are only as good as their last game - a 2-0 home league success over struggling Mallorca.

"That was an important result ahead of meeting Chelsea, as a win forced the tie into extra time.

United boss Sir Alex Ferguson generated confusion about van Nistelrooy's true state of fitness when he left him out of his squad for Saturday's FA Cup encounter with Everton.

But the Scot, never one to hand his opponents too much information about his selection plans, has since confirmed that his favourite Dutchman will play some role in the proceedings.

"We might be putting Ruud in cold but he has been great in training and every time he plays in a European game, you just know he is going to score," said Ferguson.

Whether he does that on Wednesday night could well depend on the defender who is a strong candidate for the title of Ferguson's least favourite Dutchman, Jaap Stam.

The defender has still to receive a satisfactory explanation of why he was offloaded by United in 2001 having incurred the manager's wrath with a string of indiscreet revelations in his autobiography.

In the intervening years however, Ferguson's version of events -- that Stam had simply reached his sell-by date -- has looked less and less credible, and there would be no better way to ram home that point than with a commanding display against his compatriot on Wednesday night.

"If Ruud is not fit, that will obviously be a bonus for us but until I see a team-sheet without his name on it I will be assuming that he is playing," said Stam.

"Going back to Manchester is not about a personal vendetta for me. It is about showing I am a top player

PREVIEW: MANCHESTER UNITED V MILAN Milan's sweet memories

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Manchester

The last time AC Milan visited Old Trafford they went home with the European Cup. That was courtesy of Andriy Shevchenko's penalty in the shoot-out that followed a strictly-for-the-purists 2003 final against Juventus.

Penalties are not on the agenda on Wednesday but Carlo Ancelotti, the Milan coach, would probably settle for the same goalless result after 90 minutes, given that he has been forced to make the trip from northern Italy to northern England without either Shevchenko or Filippo Inzaghi.

Both strikers have been sidelined by injury at a time when United are preparing to welcome their own most reliable source of significant goals, Ruud van Nistelrooy, back to the fold.

The Dutch striker has not kicked a ball for the United first team since the end of November.

But his Achilles tendon injury has finally healed and 36 goals in 37 European appearances for his current employers make a compelling case for his return to centre stage on the occasion of Wednesday's 'classico' -- the first meeting of these two great clubs since Milan edged an ill-tempered semi-final encounter back in 1969.

On that occasion the English club were reigning champions of Europe and they were left bitterly aggrieved when Denis Law had a perfectly good goal disallowed in the second leg when it would have

and doing well for AC Milan, that is my only interest."

If van Nistelrooy is not fully fit, he was certainly talking a good game in the build-up to the match.

"I've been out far too long and I'm eager to make up for lost time," he said.

"Nobody knows just how much I get stirred up by matches like this one. It is as though somebody has strapped a time-bomb to my body and it is ready to explode."

Shevchenko's absence has left Milan dependent on the striking ability of Hernan Crespo, who rarely generated fear among English defences during his unhappy time at Chelsea.

Crespo is expected to be deployed as a lone frontman with Brazilian duo Kaka and Serginho operating behind him and in front of a solid midfield made up of Rino Gattuso, Andrea Pirlo and Clarence Seedorf.

United meanwhile are expected to have Ryan Giggs back in action after a rest designed to protect his delicate hamstrings.

"We have played in some massive games down the years but there are none bigger than AC Milan," said Giggs.

"They have huge strength in depth. You tend to forget the number of quality players they have in their squad. But this is the sort of challenge all players want.

"We all enjoy playing in the Premiership and the FA Cup but in the Champions League you are pitting yourself against the cream of Europe."

Hayden hammers Kiwis Tough baptism

FROM PAGE 13 attack it would have been Andrew Symonds, but he finished his first over with two wickets claiming the big hitting Craig McMillan (12) and Chris Cairns (22).

He later added the scalp of McCullum to have New Zealand at seven for 135 before Wilson helped bring some respectability to the New Zealand total by scoring 22 in a 62-run partnership with Vettori.

Australia lead the five-match series 2-0 with the third game in Auckland on Saturday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second one-day international between New Zealand and Australia in Christchurch on Tuesday: AUSTRALIA

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Vettori c McCullum b Tuffey 0, Extras: (lb-1, w-6, nb-5) 12, Total: (For 6 wks in 50 overs) 314, Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-99, 3-232, 4-237, 5-254, 6-283.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Tuffey 8 1 72 1, Mills 10 0 62 2, Cairns 10 0 63 1, Vettori 10 0 31 0, Wilson 6 0 57 0, Astle 6 0 28 0.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Fleming c Gilchrist b Lee 1, Astle c Gilchrist b McGrath 3, Sinclair c Gilchrist b Lee 15, Marshall c Gilchrist b McGrath 16, McMillan c Gilchrist b Symonds 12, Cairns c Hayden b Symonds 22, McCullum c and b Symonds 20.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Vettori c sub (Kitch) b Gillespie 83, Wilson c Ponting b Gillespie 22, Mills run out 4, Tuffey not out 0, Extras: (lb-3, w-4, nb-3) 10, Total: (All out in 40.4 overs) 208, Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-12, 3-28, 4-49, 5-72, 6-73, 7-135, 8-197, 9-208.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Lee 8 2 28 2, McGrath 7 0 42 2, Gillespie 9.4 1 45 2, Symonds 6 0 41 3, Hogg 10 0 49 0.

Result: Australia won by 106 runs to lead series 2-0. Man-of-the-match: Matthew Hayden.

Toss: New Zealand. Umpires: Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and Billy Bowden (New Zealand). Third match: Feb 26, Auckland.

TV row threatens

FROM PAGE 13 TV," Mahendra said. But the arrangement hit the board hard financially.

"We have lost a lot of revenue because of this during the series against Australia. It led to many questions and problems within the board," Mahendra added.

The tour has already been delayed by three days due to a dispute over venues. The Pakistan Cricket Board had threatened to pull out if India insisted on hosting a Test in Ahmedabad in the western state of Gujarat which witnessed the country's worst Hindu-Muslim riots in a decade in 2002.

India scrapped the Ahmedabad Test while Pakistan agreed to play an additional one-dayer there.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: ACROSS 39 Ewe's mate, 41 Croft of "Tomb Raider", 42 Old e.g. saying, 49 Take out of action, 51 Indigent partner, 52 Currier's son, 53 Part of UCLA, 54 "Do ...", 55 Speedy others ..., 56 Have bills subject, 57 Disarray, 20 Blueprint, 21 Actress Elisabeth, 23 Zodiac member, 24 Revolvers, e.g., 28 Graf --, 31 Expert, 32 Hum-dinger, 34 Under the weather, 35 Cribbage scorers, 37 Pavement.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with clues: COGDTKTHXBD OHPDJLFDJLFXBXM XIJLRLHXNMLCRTLBBCH PDTMI NLXPLMLFGPKK. Saturday's Cryptoquip: WHEN SOMEONE BECOMES DULL DURING THE WINTER, I GUESS HE COULD BE JEJUNE IN JANUARY. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals C.

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.