

Blignaut back in Zim squad

CRICINFO, undated

Andy Blignaut has been named in the Zimbabwe squad for the first Test against South Africa at Cape Town which starts today.

It follows Heath Streak's return to the national side in Wednesday's final one-day international at Port Elizabeth.

Blignaut, an explosive all-rounder, is the latest of the 14 rebels who have not played for almost a year to make a comeback after agreeing terms with Zimbabwe Cricket.

While out of the international arena Blignaut, 26, tried to forge a career in Australian domestic cricket by signing with Tasmania. But he had a chastening experience, as poor form and injury restricted him to just one first-class match, which resulted in figures of 12 overs for 79 runs.

However, his Test record is more impressive – he has taken 51 wickets at 32 apiece with five-wicket hauls against India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He is also the only Zimbabwean to take a Test match hat-trick, against Bangladesh at Harare in 2003-04.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Ghagot Krira Chakra defeated Brave Heart SC by seven wickets in the First Division Cricket super league at the local stadium here yesterday.

Brave Heart, who elected to bat after winning the toss, were bundled out for 144.

In reply Ghagot reached 148 for three in just 23.2 overs.

Chalk & cheese

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Inzamam, being the best and more experienced batsman of his team, is always expected to lead from the front.

He sometimes may not appear to be as much involved in the game as his Indian counterpart, but he cannot afford to fail with the bat in a side than on experience.

Inzamam is no Imran Khan, a former captain who transformed Pakistan into a fighting unit with the sheer force of his personality and performances. Imran was strong enough to have a major say in almost all things concerning his team.

Inzamam has often been accused of being "soft", but is second to none when it comes to setting an example with his own performance.

He is Pakistan's leading run-getter in both forms of the game, having scored 7,052 in 97 Tests and 10,631 runs in 336 one-dayers.

Inzamam is also different from Ganguly in that he has been leading a seemingly divided team, at least until the arrival of celebrated English coach Bob Woolmer.

Ganguly and Inzamam, however, both perform under the pressure of fans' expectations. Neither can afford defeat over the next month.

Harbhajan

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Now the 24-year-old, nicknamed the 'Turbanator' in a reference to the head-covering he wears as a Sikh, can look forward to playing in India's home Test and one-day series against arch-rivals Pakistan later this month.

In his career to date Harbhajan has taken 189 wickets in 43 Tests.

This is not the first time he has had his action come under official scrutiny.

Back in 1998 he was forced to undergo remedial work in London where former England off-spinner Fred Titmus helped him remodel his action.

And, in common with all bowlers, there remains the possibility his action could yet be questioned again although the new regulations make such an outcome less likely than in previous years.

Streak heroics go awry

Cricket

AFP, Port Elizabeth

South Africa completed a clean sweep despite an impressive return to international cricket by former Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak in the third and final limited-overs international at St George's Park Wednesday.

South Africa won by five wickets with 21 balls to spare but it was a close contest after South Africa gained crushing wins in the first two matches.

Inspired by Streak, Zimbabwe made a remarkable comeback after being 35 for five early in the match.

Streak hit 68 in a total of 206 for eight, then took the first South African wicket as the home side slipped to 79 for four.

It should have been 79 for five but Justin Kemp was given not out by umpire Ian Howell when he edged his first ball from Tawanda Muparwa to Zimbabwe captain and wicketkeeper Tatenda Taibu.

Kemp, who was dropped on 21 and 30, went on to clinch victory for South Africa by hitting an unbeaten 78 off 81 balls with four fours and four sixes.

Zimbabwe were in with a chance until the 44th over when South Africa scored 17 off an over from Christopher Mpofu.

Kemp was made man-of-the-match by match referee Alan Hurst of Australia but it was Streak who changed the momentum of what had been a one-sided series.

He started his innings when Zimbabwe were in desperate trouble at 35 for five and steered his

side's recovery until he was run out off the penultimate ball.

Streak, 30, had not played for Zimbabwe since leading the country against Bangladesh on March 14, 2004.

He was sacked as captain after a dispute over selection and was one of 15 players who walked out on the Zimbabwe Cricket Union.

He rejoined the team Monday after agreeing to sign a new contract.

Lack of match practice showed as he batted cautiously in the early part of his innings and he did not hit the first of his five boundaries until he had faced 65 balls.

He shared stands of 67 with Brendan Taylor (41) and 88 with Gavin Ewing (46) as South Africa failed to press home their early dominance.

South Africa were captained for the first time by Nicky Boje, with regular skipper Graeme Smith resting a sore left ankle ahead of a two-match Test series which starts in Cape Town Friday.

With most of South Africa's leading bowlers also being rested, Boje had a second string attack at his disposal but it was surprising that he did not set more attacking fields after Zimbabwe's early collapse.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the third and final limited overs international between South Africa and Zimbabwe at St George's Park Wednesday:

ZIMBAWE

Matsikenyi c Boucher b Zondeki 17
Rogers c Boucher b Langeveldt 1
Williams c Kemp b Langeveldt 1
Masakadza c Gibbs b Zondeki 2

Taylor c Kemp b Bacher 41
Taibu run out (De Villiers) 0

Streak run out (Morkel) 68

Ewing b Morkel 46

Utseya not out 6

Muparwa not out 1

Extras: (lb-4, nb-6, w-13) 23

Total: (For 8 wkt in 50 overs) 206

Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-12, 3-23, 4-32, 5-35, 6-102, 7-190, 8-205

Did not bat: Mpofu

Bowler O M R W

Langeveldt 10 0 40 2

Zondeki 10 1 46 2

Kemp 6 2 17 0

Morkel 8 0 54 1

Boje 10 0 23 0

Bacher 6 0 22 1

SOUTHAFRICA

Bacher b Mpofu 9

De Villiers c Taibu b Streak 7

Rudolph c Taibu b Muparwa 33

Gibbs c Taibu b Muparwa 21

Prince run out (Williams) 28

Kemp not out 78

Boucher not out 18

Extras: (lb-1, nb-2, w-10) 13

Total: (For 5 wkt in 46.3 overs) 207

Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-35, 3-72, 4-79, 5-138

Did not bat: Morkel, Boje, Zondeki, Langeveldt

Bowler O M R W

Streak 8 1 28 1

Mpofu 9 0 59 1

Muparwa 7 0 25 2

Utseya 8 0 27 0

Williams 9.3 0 43 0

Ewing 5 0 24 0

Result: South Africa won by 5 wickets and sweep the 3-ODI series 3-0.

Man-of-the-match: Justin Kemp.

Man-of-the-series: Graeme Smith.

Umpires: D Harper (Australia) and I Howell (South Africa).

Cairns says no to Test offer

REUTERS, Wellington

Chris Cairns has turned down an offer to rejoin New Zealand's injury-hit Test team for this month's three-match series against Australia.

Cairns retired from the Test arena last year to concentrate on one-day cricket as the demands of playing both were taking a toll on his body.

With the Kiwis battered by injuries in the lead-up to the series, New Zealand coach John Bracewell asked Cairns to consider making a comeback next month but the all-rounder said he was unable to play.

"I've closed that chapter of my career," Cairns told reporters on Thursday.

"I've still got a goal to play the next World Cup and if I play Test cricket I could ruin that."

"It's about me following a dream and I still think I can get there."

Bracewell said he fully understood Cairns' position.

"His response was basically that he was flattered by the offer but he had drawn a line under that," Bracewell said.

"He also didn't really think his ankle would last the rigours of a Test match. He's drawn that line but I had to ask him and he understood that."

Pakistan's faulty

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at the crease before giving a bat-pad catch to skipper Mohammad Kaif at short mid-wicket.

Inzamam and Kamal then propped up the innings with their sensible knocks, but Pakistan's batting still left a lot to be desired ahead of the Test series.

Pakistan will also play six one-day internationals on their tour of India, their first in six years.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the opening day of a three-day practice match between Pakistan and Indian Board President's XI on Thursday:

PAKISTAN: First innings

But run out 21

Umar c Kaif b Rudrapratap 37

Younis c Jadhav b Gagandeep 0

Youhana c Patel b Paul 18

Inzamam lbw b Rao 35

Kamal not out 43

Razzak not out 2

Extras: (b-5, lb-2, nb-2) 9

Total: (For 5 wkt in 45 overs) 165

Fall of wickets: 1-54, 2-55, 3-83, 4-83, 5-155

To bat: Akmal, Sami, Kaneria, Naved

Bowler O M R W

Rudrapratap 13 3 50 1

Gagandeep 15 3 40 1

Powar 4 0 22 0

Paul 8 2 23 1

Rao 5 0 23 1

BOARD PRESIDENTS XI: Kaif, Jadhav, Parab, Patel, Rao, Patel, Raina, Powar, Rudrapratap, Gagandeep, Paul.

Dhaka's run ends

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after they elected to bat at the Barisal Stadium.

But any hopes of a first win for the hosts were promptly laid to rest as Sylhet chased in style. Number five Golam Mawla led the way with a magnificent 85 not out.

Even though they had lost opener Golam Rahman without a run on the board, fellow opener Maniruzzaman, fresh from a match-saving innings in the last four-day fixture, kept his composure which allowed the other batsmen to play their natural game. The Mymensingh batsman, playing as a guest player for Sylhet, laid anchor (55 off 93) and shared a decisive 109 for the fourth wicket with Mawla who came to the wicket at 70-3. Mawla went on to partner Rezaul Haque (46 not out off 51 ball(s)) in an unfinished 70-run stand for the sixth wicket as Sylhet reached home with eight balls to spare. Man-of-the-match Mawla's innings had eight fours and a six.

HEWITT TO LEAD AUSTRALIA

World No.2 Lleyton Hewitt will lead off Australia's Davis Cup first-round tennis tie against 144th-ranked Austrian Alexander Peya on grass in Sylhet on Friday.

Australia's second singles player Wayne Arthurs will take on Austria's number one player Jürgen Melzer in the other singles. Australian captain John Fitzgerald designated Arthurs to team up with doubles specialist Todd Woodbridge in Saturday's doubles against the Austrian pair of Julian Knowle and Peya.

In Sunday's reverse singles, Hewitt will take on Melzer, ranked 34 in the world, in the battle of the national

Serena crawls into last 8

Tennis

AFP, Dubai

Serena Williams overcame an early scare in windy conditions to beat Russia's Elena Bovina in three sets to reach the last eight of the Dubai Open here on Wednesday