

Warne extends Hants stay

REUTERS, London

Shane Warne has signed a two-year contract extension at Hampshire with an option of a further two years, the English county said on Thursday.

The 35-year-old Australian leg-spinner will continue as club captain.

However, Warne will miss a large chunk of next season as he will be playing for Australia against England in the Ashes Tests from July. The world record Test wicket-taker has retired from one-day internationals.

"It is a lengthy contract, he has signed for two years with an option of a rolling two years," Hampshire spokesman John Hughes said.

"He has bought a house in the Southampton area and is really committing himself to the county," Warne joined Hampshire in 2000 and looks set to stay until he is 39.

Fellow Australian Simon Katich also returns to the Rose Bowl for a third spell this season.

Marshall makes

FROM PAGE 13 with the introduction of Warne, who trapped Fleming leg before wicket for 18.

Marshall and Cumming then shared a 97-run stand to lift New Zealand to 153 for two.

Lou Vincent came and went with a quick 27 and then the experienced Nathan Astle appeared to nurture Marshall through to his century in an unbroken 66 run stand for the fourth wicket.

But there was little in the pitch to enthuse over for the pacemen as Cumming got off the mark confidently with a pull shot for four off McGrath, who bowled 25 overs without success, although he had Fleming dropped by Langer and Cumming dropped by Warne.

Warne had figures of one for 60 off 25 overs, while the other successful bowlers were Kasprowicz with one for 64 and Michael Clarke one for 16.

"It was a very tough decision to leave Brett (Lee) out after the way he's bowled, but the guys who are there have done well over a long period," Ponting said.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close on the first day of the first Test between New Zealand and Australia at Jade Stadium in Christchurch on Thursday:

NEW ZEALAND: First innings
Cumming c Gillespie b Kasprowicz 74
Fleming lbw b Warne 18
Marshall not out 103
Vincent lbw b Clarke 27
Astle not out 29
Extras: (b-4, lb-6 w-2, nb-2) 14
Total: (For 3 wkts in 94 overs) 265
Fall of wicket: 1-56, 2-153, 3-199
To bat: McMillan, McCullum, Vettori, Franklin, O'Brien, Martin.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
McGrath	25	7	59	0
Gillespie	21	5	56	0
Kasprowicz	18	4	64	1
Warne	25	6	60	1
Clarke	5	0	16	1

AUSTRALIA: Ponting, Hayden, Langer, Martyn, Clarke, Katich, Gilchrist, Warne, Gillespie, Kasprowicz, McGrath.

Toss: Australia.

Umpires: Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and David Shepherd (England).

BD A win a thriller

FROM PAGE 13 Strydom making 52 and the experienced Craig Ervine hammering a fine 89. But, just as they were closing in on victory, two late run-outs halted their charge and Bangladesh clung on to make a successful, if nervy, defence of their total. Left-arm pacer Syed Russel was the pick of the attack with 3-44 from ten overs while part-timer Waseluddin chipped in with a couple of wickets.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Players and officials of BJMC who won the Pepsi 17th National Women's Handball Championship defeating Bangladesh Ansar in the final at the Dampara Police Lines ground in Chittagong yesterday.

Murali not on SL side



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan will miss the upcoming Test series in New Zealand because he is still recovering from an injured shoulder, it was announced on Thursday.

Muralitharan, out of Test cricket since August last year, was not included in an 18-man training squad for the two-Test tour which was postponed from January due to the Asian tsunamis which ravaged Sri Lanka on December 26.

The 32-year-old, who underwent corrective surgery last month, will target a return with English county Lancashire after getting married to an Indian girl later this month.

"It is unfortunate Murali will not be around in New Zealand, but he needs time to recover," said Sri Lanka's chairman of selectors Asantha De Mel.

The off-spinner claimed a world record 532 victims in 91 Tests before the injury, but was later surpassed by Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne who has so far grabbed 567 wickets in 121 Test matches.

Muralitharan played his first international match since August when he turned out for an Asian XI against a World XI in the tsunami charity one-dayer at Melbourne in Australia in January.

But doctors ordered minor surgery on the right shoulder when the pain resurfaced after the match.

The two Test matches on the New Zealand tour will be played in

Napier (April 4-8) and Wellington (April 11-15).

The training squad, expected to be pruned to 14 next week, also does not include left-arm seamer Nuwan Zoysa who is recovering from a knee injury.

"We will be looking to bring about a balance for the two Tests with six batsmen, one all-rounder and four bowlers," said De Mel.

LANKA SQUAD
Marvan Atapattu (captain), Mahela Jayawardene, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Thilan Samaraweera, Ian Daniel, Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekera, Farveez Maharoof, Upul Chandana, Rangana Herath, Thilina Kandamby, Avishka Gunawardene, Dilhara Fernando, Gayan Wijekoon, Ruchira Perera.

John stays away from it



AFP, Christchurch

Australian cricket coach John Buchanan has distanced himself from Brett Lee's surprise non-selection for the first Test against New Zealand which opened here Thursday.

Despite terrorising New Zealand's batsmen in the recent one-day series, and twice breaking the magical 160 kilometres (99 mile) an hour barrier, Lee found himself carrying the drinks in the first Test at Jade Stadium.

New Zealand posted 265 for three on the first day after being sent into bat.

The Australian selection panel of Trevor Hohns, Allan Border, David Boon and Andrew Hilditch opted for the pace attack of Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie and Michael Kasprowicz, who served them ably in Tests this season.

"It's no secret that Brett performed particularly well through the one-day series, but all the fast bowlers did and have done previously," Buchanan said.

"I think the selectors took every possible thought into that selection meeting and that's the team they came up with."

Australian captain Ricky Ponting said before the team announcement that he thought Lee had a psychological hold over the New Zealand batsmen, but

that apparently wasn't enough.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming and century-maker Hamish Marshall were non-committal about Lee's omission.

"As it turned out they had to make a tough decision, all we could worry about was the worst case scenario which was four seamers coming at us at once. Dropping one off made it an easier morning, but not by much," Fleming said.

Marshall scored his maiden Test century and Craig Cumming added 74 as New Zealand dominated Australia on day one of the first Test here.

"They're all quality bowlers. He's a guy with something a little bit different, but any of those bowlers on their day can rip through a side," Marshall said.

One person who wasn't taking Lee's omission lying down was his manager Neil Maxwell, a former New Zealand Cricket marketing manager, who said it was a disgrace and claimed the home batsmen were "paranoid" about Lee.

"When you've got a person that has the wood over an opposition the way he has, to leave him out to play an attack built around three very similar bowlers -- particularly when he has done everything asked of him -- on the basis the other three have done nothing wrong, is a weak argument."

Top players

FROM PAGE 13
Dhaka will be boosted by the return of batsmen Mohammad Ashraful and Al Shahrir and pacers Talha Jubair and Anwar Munir while the home side gets back Nafees Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed and seamer Tareq Aziz.

Sylhet will relish the return of Rajin Saleh, Alok Kapali and Nazmul Hossain while Manzarul Islam and Abdur Razzak boost Khulna who will again be without captain Habibul Bashar who is still nursing a toe injury.

Rajshahi, third in the first-class table with 12 points, will have captain Khaled Mashud eligible for playing once again after the Bangladesh wicket-keeper missed the last fixture due to a one-match ban.

Proteas seek repeat act

FROM PAGE 13 good areas and create chances."

South Africa's batsmen scored at 6.8 runs per over in the first Test and Smith said there would be no change to the approach or batting order.

"We want to provide stability in the batting order so we don't want to chop and change. There's no benefit to it.

"Herschelle Gibbs or Ashwell Prince would love an opportunity, but sometimes Test cricket is about getting used to waiting a bit."

Smith said he would have no hesitation putting Zimbabwe in on the grassy pitch at Centurion, 40 kms north of Johannesburg.

"The pitch looks quite green, it never does as much as you expect however. It will probably do a bit in the morning as usual and it always swings on the high veld, but it's difficult to get the decision right here."

Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu said the tourists were confident of producing a better performance in the second Test.

"The guys are pretty much ready and geared up after working hard in practice the last three days," Taibu said. "The first Test was very tough

BJMC retain nat'l h'ball crown

SPORTS REPORTER

BJMC retained the national title when they recorded a comfortable 31-21 victory over Bangladesh Ansar in the final of the Pepsi 17th National Women's Handball Championship at the Dampara Police Lines ground in Chittagong yesterday.

It was BJMC's fourth crown in five years and third time in a row which extended 12-time champions Ansars' woes as they failed to win the trophy after three consecutive appearances in the final.

Shahida scored 11 goals for BJMC while man-of-the-tournament Jahanara netted six.

Madaripur defeated Narail 11-5 in the play-off to clinch the third place.

State Minister for youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman distributed the prizes as chief guest.

Nat'l athletics on

FROM PAGE 13 featured a colourful aerobics display by children of the Chittagong Shishu Academy and a tribal dance sequence from the indigenous performers of Rangamati and Bandarban.

Only the men's 1500 metres was held under lights on the opening day.

President of Bangladesh Athletic Federation Abdus Salam and vice-president of Chittagong Divisional Krira Sangstha (CDVS) Dastagir Chowdhury also addressed the opening function.

Pervez invited

FROM PAGE 13 consider," he said last week in Islamabad.

The Indian foreign ministry said Wednesday Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would welcome a visit by President Musharraf to watch a match between the two teams.

On Thursday, Singh told India's parliament that he had "decided to invite President Musharraf to come to India and watch a cricket match" adding he hoped the general and his family would enjoy their visit.

"I must say that nothing brings the people of our sub-continent together more than our love for cricket and Bollywood cinema," he said referring to India's prolific Hindi film industry.

Pakistani foreign office spokesman expressed the hope Musharraf's possible visit would spur the 14-month old peace process between the two countries.

"High level contacts, no matter what the occasion, provide further impetus to the normalisation process," Jilani said.

Nafees, Aftab

FROM PAGE 13 a date to reward the national cricketers who were part of Bangladesh's historic Test and one-day series triumph against Zimbabwe.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to hand over the rewards. Each cricketer will receive Tk 1.5 lakh for being part of the one-day or the Test team.

Clijsters' positive start



AFP, Indian Wells

Upbeat and smiling, former world number one Kim Clijsters says she is ready to put the pain, emotion and fear of the past 12 months behind her.

Clijsters endured a tumultuous 2004 season which included a wrist injury that almost ended her career.

She spent much of the year on the sidelines and underwent surgery in June to repair tendon and bone damage.

She then re-injured the wrist in October and saw her ranking plummet to 133.

To compound matters, Clijsters broke off her engagement with Australian tennis star Lleyton Hewitt in October.

They are both competing in this week's 4.8 million dollar WTA and ATP Pacific Life Open tournament, making this the first event featuring the pair since the breakup.

"I am a stronger person and a more grown up person," said Clijsters on Wednesday after cruising to a 6-2, 6-1 victory over Australia's Nicole Pratt in the first round here.

The 21-year-old Belgian needed just 49 minutes to dispatch Pratt. She was never in trouble, covering the court with a wide selection of shots and hammering 16 winners to her opponent's four.

"This is my first overseas tournament (of 2005)," Clijsters said.

"I felt good, especially once I got going. I feel like I am getting back into my match rhythm and I am happy that my backhand is still there."

The 2003 Pacific Life champion, Clijsters pulled out of last year's tournament complaining of the same injury that eventually led to her surgery.

The past six months she has been in her native Belgium rehabilitating and pondering her tennis

future.

"They had to cut the tendon and shave the bone. There was a cyst growing there so they had to cut that out too," Clijsters said.

Doctors told her the injury could be career-ending, which caused her to do a lot of soul searching.

"For three or four weeks I was thinking I might not be able to play again. The doctors were saying that as well," Clijsters said.

"But I wasn't ready to quit tennis. I have always been pretty good at keeping things in proper perspective."

"Tennis is just tennis. The last five years I have been spending a lot of time in Australia (with Hewitt) and now I am spending more time in Belgium."

Clijsters and Hewitt completed

"You can learn from everything and everything turns out to be a positive if you look at it that way."

Unseeded Clijsters is making her sixth consecutive appearance here. She converted five of six break points in her opening match and had just two double faults, four fewer than Pratt.

With 21 career WTA singles titles to her credit, Clijsters is hoping that her dominating performance over Pratt is an indication that she is poised to start winning tournaments again.

"She has been playing pretty well and is going to come back to the top level very soon," said second seed Amelie Mauresmo of France.

Added seventh seeded Nathalie Dechy, who had a similar injury that kept her sidelined for six months, "It is great that Kim is back."

Clijsters began her comeback last month in Antwerp, reaching the quarterfinals in her homeland.

Clijsters' countrywoman Justine Henin-Hardenne will not defend her Indian Wells title as she is still recovering from a knee injury that caused her to miss the Australian Open.

Henin-Hardenne is expected to make her WTA return at the NASDAQ-100 Open in Miami, which begins March 21.

The women's draw here includes the three top-ranked players as Russia's Maria Sharapova is seeded third.

The Williams (Venus and Serena) sisters are absent, having decided not to compete here since they were viciously booed by the crowd in 2001.

In their first round matches Wednesday, France's Severine Beltrame defeated Czech Denisa Chladkova 6-2, 7-6, Silvija Talaja of Croatia stopped Spain's Arantxa Parra Santonja 6-2, 6-0, Czech Eva Birnerova defeated Tamerine Tanasugarn of Thailand 6-4, 6-2 and Italy's Tathiana Garbin crushed Aniko Kapros of Hungary 6-1, 6-2.



KIM CLIJSTERS

the perfect love match in 2003 when they shared the California desert titles with Clijsters beating Lindsay Davenport and Hewitt stopping Gustavo Kuerten in the men's final.

Clijsters didn't mention Hewitt by name on Wednesday but she did credit her strong family ties with helping her get through the turmoil.

"It is difficult especially when it gets so personal. But my family has been incredible," she said.

Not what Paris wanted to see



REUTERS, Paris

Strikes have disrupted French train and air traffic, left schools understaffed and newspapers undelivered, as Olympic inspectors assess a bid by Paris to host the 2012 Games.

Railway and energy workers, teachers and post office staff all took industrial action on Thursday against job cuts and the government's plans to make the 35-hour work week more flexible.

Queues built up at railway stations across France as only one train in four was serving Paris suburbs, and some services to cities in southern France were cut to a third. Many Paris subway trains were suspended and some stations were

closed.

"What a waste of time!" said Sebastian, a civil servant getting out of the metro. "But I understand people who are on strike. It's important to defend our 35-hour work week."

"I'm quicker on my blades than with the metro," said one young boy speeding through Paris on his roller skates.

Action by air traffic controllers axed 20 to 25 per cent of flights at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport, officials said, delays averaging two hours at Paris's two main airports.

"France paralysed," Le Figaro daily said on its front page. "Black Thursday in public transport," La Tribune daily said.

Thursday's strikes followed protests this week by students and scientists against government reforms, adding to the woes of

centre-right Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin as he seeks to rally support for a 'Yes' vote in a referendum on the European Union constitution in May.

"Our watchwords are clear: jobs, wages, the 35-hour week," Bernard Thibault from the CGT trade union told Le Parisien daily, saying the government should withdraw its plans to make France's rules on working time more flexible.

Unions have insisted they want to avoid disrupting inspectors from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) who are on a four-day visit to assess Paris's bid for 2012.

"In the march, you will be able to spot T-shirts and banners in favour of Paris's candidacy for the 2012 Games," Francois Chereque from the CFDT trade union told Liberation daily.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

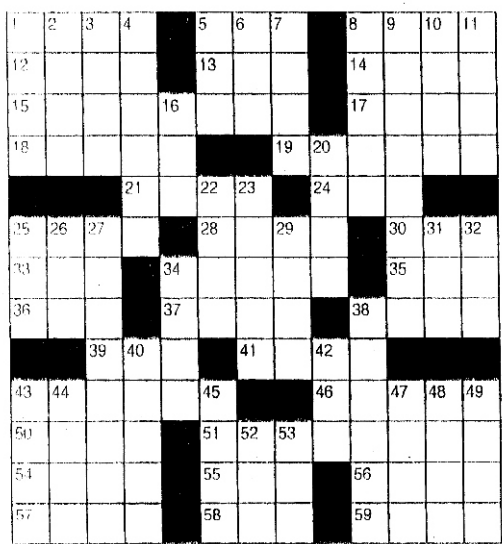
1 Lapidary's supply
5 "Amazing Race" episode
8 Certain agt.
12 Not orig.
13 Ostinch's kin
14 Georgia city
15 Winner-to-be, maybe
17 Belligerent deity
18 "Survivor" group
19 Learned one
21 Oedles
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25 Patrick Dennis auntie
28 Peregrinate
30 Name-tags, for short
33 Enos' granny
34 Sound portion

DOWN

59 Bullets
59 Distort
1 Talent
2 Eastern potentale
3 Skirt
41 Appear
43 Asian peninsula
46 Poly-nesian statuery
50 "B" — "boy"
51 Singer
54 Take five
55 Man-mouse link
56 Perry's creator
57 Cisterns
16 Writer Buscaglia
20 Bullets
22 Verifiable
23 Pops
25 Kitten's call
26 Rd.
27 Olympics champ
29 Staffer
31 Female rabbit
32 Bottom line
34 Partner
38 "Candid Camera" reactions
40 Desires
42 JFK info
43 Sports-caster
44 Bewildered
45 Acknowledge
47 Michael's dad
48 Wight, e.g.
49 Do a slow burn
52 Trancar contents
53 Urban transport

Solution time: 21 mins.

RETAH ADD LITCH
URDU LIT DOZE
MESSAGES DRAW
EPA PLIERS
ARGUE GOON
ROOM LESSENEED
ABE DANES CRA
BESSEMER RIGIT
EERBS MINGE
SIEJETA URN
ANNA SESSIONS
SKIM TEE SHOO
HYDRE ELIS HOWL



CRYPTOQUIP

ORE YIOS TNHES SNLP
N YELF! C OIJFOS ORF
LES TRETLEU KEM NH
CMELX UFKCTCFHTX
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: DURING THE TRIAL A MAN WORE WAY TOO MUCH COLOGNE. I CALLED "ODOR IN THE COURT!"
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals N

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 and you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Abdur Rouf Sarker, director (curriculum), Bangladesh Technical Education Board, hands over prizes to the winners of the UCEP Dhaka Technical School's annual sports competition in Mirpur yesterday.