

Pietersen's opportunity



AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen has been given an opportunity to make the most of the absence of his Ashes rivals by starring for England in the triangular one-day series with Australia and Bangladesh.

The South Africa-born Hampshire batsman was named Tuesday in a 14-man squad which will also play in England first Twenty20 match, against Australia at the county's Rose Bowl ground on June 13.

Hard-hitting Pietersen came to prominence by scoring three hundreds during England's 4-1 winter one-day series defeat in South Africa, posting 454 runs in all, including an unbeaten 100 off 69 balls, the quickest three figure score by an England batsman in a limited overs international, at East London.

That had led to speculation that Pietersen, 24, who was deputising for injured all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, would makes his Test debut against Bangladesh.

But with Ian Bell in fine early season form and the selectors staying loyal to veteran Graham Thorpe, there was no place in the middle order for Pietersen in the side that thrashed the Asian minnows by an innings and 261 runs last week at Lord's.

Unsurprisingly, England stuck with the same side Tuesday for the second and final Test against Bangladesh starting at the Riverside on Friday.



KEVIN PIETERSEN

Australia in the first Ashes Test starting at Lord's on July 21.

Certainly no sledging the Aussies dish out at Pietersen is likely to equal the abuse he received from players and fans alike in South Africa angered by his decision to reject the Proteas.

He had opted out of representing them because he felt he was being unfairly hindered by a positive discrimination policy designed to boost the prospects of black players

Among those who believe he

should be involved in the Ashes are Shane Warne, the Australia leg-spin great who is set to be a key member of Ricky Ponting's attack and is also Pietersen's captain at Hampshire.

Simon Katich, Hampshire's 'other' Australia international, paid Pietersen the compliment of saying that during the Ashes he could become England's batting equivalent of aggressive run-scoring Australia 'keeper Adam Gilchrist.

"It wouldn't surprise me if he plays because just knowing the type of character he is and how crucial he could be in that he can turn a game in the space of a couple of hours," Katich said in Brisbane on Tuesday ahead of the Australia squad's departure for England.

"He's done that in the one-day game and in Test cricket, someone that plays like he does, can try and dominate our bowling.

"Whether he does that or not we'll see but he will try to and that's something that they will look at because they've never had that in the past. We've been able to dictate terms with (Shane) Warne and (Glenn) McGrath."

And David Graveney, England's chairman of selectors, admitted Tuesday: "Kevin Pietersen will challenge because he is a talent. The media have quite rightly promoted Kevin because of his South Africa form.

"We hear the claims for Kevin loud and clear but to his credit when he wasn't included in the Test squad he, for one, admitted he hadn't got enough runs but he would get more and he's done that -- his bat has done the talking."

Ganguly hopes for the best

CRICINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly has expressed the hope that his stint with Glamorgan will fetch him as much success as his previous tours to England with the Indian team. Ganguly, who has been signed up by the county to play for them at least till the end of July, was to play his first match Wednesday against Sussex at Swansea.

"I'm really looking forward to this opportunity of playing for Glamorgan," Ganguly said. "I've done well in this country before, in Tests and one-day internationals, and I didn't have too bad a time with Lancashire either. We finished as runners-up in the County Championship and I did well in their one-day matches."

Ganguly has an excellent record in England -- in six Tests he averages 74 with the bat and 31.50 with the ball, while in 20 one-day internationals there he averages 39.25, only marginally below his career average. However, his stint with Lancashire in 2000 wasn't quite so impressive -- in 14 first-class matches he only managed an average of 31.95, with no centuries.

Ganguly has also been struggling for runs over the last year, but Robert Croft, the Glamorgan captain, had no doubt that Ganguly would be an inspiration to the rest of the team. "Sourav's a special cricketer, everyone knows what he can do at the highest level. He'll score a lot of runs and will also pass on his experience to the youngsters coming through," Ganguly is expected to bat at No.5 in the four-day games and open the batting in the one-dayers.

Glamorgan have had a wretched start to the season, losing all five Division One matches so far, but Ganguly was keen to help stop the slide. "It will be a challenge after a poor start, but I'm very happy to be part of a young team," Ganguly told BBC Sport Wales. "There'll be a lot of expectation, but I've been around for 10 years, I'm an established international cricketer and I have to put the performances on the board."

He also revealed that the call-up by the county had come as a surprise to him. "I was in England for a family holiday and was going to go to Paris for the French Open, but when this chance came I said I'd love to do it," he said. "I only had a tourist visa and had to fly to Brussels to sort out a working one, and now I'm in Wales for the first time."

"I have played against a few of the guys like David Hemp, Alex Wharf and Robert Croft and it's just great to have the chance to play in this country again."

Rangamati soccer

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Kaptai Upazila knocked out Binita Roy Smriti Library Club 4-2 in the tiebreaker after their Zila Parishad Junior (Under-14) Gold Cup Football match ended in a goalless draw at the local stadium yesterday. Sapchhari Ribeng Club recorded a 3-1 victory over Kawkhali Upazila on the previous day.

Naniarchar Upazila will take on Bilaichhari today.

Owen steals the show



REUTERS, New York

Michael Owen grabbed a hat-trick as England completed their two-match tour of the US with a 3-2 victory over Colombia in a friendly on Tuesday.

Real Madrid striker Owen took his international goal tally to 32 with strikes in the 36th, 44th and 58th minutes as he plundered the second international hat-trick of his career.

Colombia replied with a first-half header from Mario Yepes and a left-foot shot by Aldo Leao Ramirez in the 78th minute.

But Owen's deadly finishing stole the show and moved him into fourth place in the list of all-time goalscorers for England ahead of Alan Shearer, Nat Lofthouse and Tom Finney.

Bobby Charlton holds the record with 49, followed by Gary Lineker and Jimmy Greaves, and at just 25 years old, Owen is still young enough to overtake them all.

His previous hat-trick had come in September 2001 during England's famous 5-1 victory over Germany in Munich.

In New Jersey's Giants Stadium, Owen opened the scoring when he ran on to a through ball from midfielder Joe Cole and lifted it past Farid Mondragon in the Colombia goal.

The in-form striker made it 2-0 seven minutes later when a quick freekick from Peter Crouch on his debut put Owen clear to score with a low shot.

The former Liverpool forward completed his hat-trick in the 58th minute by volleying home at close range from Real Madrid team mate

David Beckham's cross.

Colombia scored through Yepes's header shortly before halftime and Ramirez's shot late in the second half but England held on to complete a 3-2 victory.

It was the second win of their short tour after they began with a 2-1 victory over the U.S. in Chicago on Saturday.



PHOTO AP

THE HATTRICK HERO: England captain David Beckham (L) congratulates teammate Michael Owen after the latter scored his third goal of the match against Colombia at the Giants Stadium in New Jersey on Tuesday.

Class does the talking



REUTERS, London

Less than three years ago, Graham Thorpe walked out on his teammates as England were packing their bags for Australia.

His timing was considered so bad that several indignant former players and commentators demanded that he never be selected again.

Thorpe, however, had one rather significant ally arguing his case -- class. He soon returned to the Test fold.

There were shades of deja-vu last week when the 35-year-old left-hander suddenly announced he had signed a playing and coaching contract with New South Wales from January next year.

By ruling himself out of the winter tours to Pakistan and India, Thorpe was effectively announcing his Test retirement seven months early. He was also prompting questions about his commitment, while leaving England's disgruntled selectors in a quandary.

Should they retain Thorpe against Bangladesh this week, with the Ashes looming, for his 100th cap or look to the future immediately by turning to a younger batsman?

The fact that they have selected Thorpe for the second Test in Durham starting on Friday suggests that class has again had the last word. It seems certain that Thorpe will remain in favour for the start of the series against Australia in July.

And so he should. There are fears that Thorpe's eyes



GRAHAM THORPE

Thorpe at number five and, crucially, his captain Michael Vaughan still wants him there.

"It's down to the selectors but Thorpey has been a tremendous player for England. There are still six Test matches to play and I am sure they are six matches he will want to be

available for," he told reporters.

"His experience has been invaluable, especially over the last 12 months. As long as he keeps playing well, as long as he keeps hungry and keeps his body fit, I'm sure he'll make the selection."

Whether he remains in the England team throughout the Ashes, however, is another matter.

His eyes, not to mention his legs, are sure to be fully tested by Glenn McGrath and company. Thorpe is also short of recent form against Australia.

His decision not to tour there in 2002-3 was caused by personal turmoil following the break-up of his marriage. But he barely featured in 2001 either before being sidelined with a hand injury.

And in 1998-99 he also played only one game before bowing to back problems. You have to go back to 1997 to find Thorpe playing a significant role, with a century and a average of 57.78 over six Tests against the Australians.

He has, indeed, played just two of the last 15 tests between the sides. A slow start this time and grumbles for him to be replaced by Robert Key or Kevin Pietersen are sure to be heard.

At the moment, however, despite the selectors' irritation that he did not keep his counsel over his long-term plans for a few months longer, Thorpe looks sure of his place.

Vaughan, for one, did not seem surprised that Thorpe was already planning for life beyond the England Test team.

"We have known for a couple of years," he said with a grin, "that he is quite old."

It's drizzling in Durham

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all inspiring," said Whatmore who carries bitter memories of this place with the Sri Lankan team a few years ago.

"We were knocked around quite heavily here and the weather was very bad at that time."

Bangladesh are also going to face the inclement weather with forecast of rain till the weekend and over. The prediction is that the sun will come out not before Wednesday.

"It's gloomy now and we need some wind blowing from somewhere to take this cloud away," hoped Whatmore as he led his team to the morning training session.

The cricketers were also feeling the bite of heavy cold as they put on extra pullovers before going for the training.

Bangladesh will be the second team to play a Test match here after Zimbabwe, who also played their second Test at Chester-le-Street in June 2003.

The Africans lost the match by an innings and more importantly they collapsed for 74 in the first innings after England put up 400 odd runs after winning the toss.

Bangladesh, however, played their match against Australia in the 1999 World Cup at this very ground, where Minhazul Abedin scored his second half-century and opener Mehrab Hossain made a superb 42. But Bangladesh's combined effort was too small for the Australians who wiped those 178 runs in just 19.5 overs with Adam Gilchrist (63) blazing off guns.

Mohammad Rafique and wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud are the only surviving members of that side who are travelling with the present lot.

But both admitted that it was going to be a tall task for them in this condition and in a five-day match.

"We will have to learn quickly

how to occupy the crease. This is no place to fancy shots and we will have to dig deep if we stand any chance of a fight back," said Mashud, the only Bangladeshi batsman who offered some resistance at Lord's.

Srinath calls for rotation policy for pacemen

PTI, Mumbai

In an attempt to streamline the Indian pace attack, former speedster Javagal Srinath today advocated the need for having a rotation policy regarding playing fast bowlers in the team.

"The selectors should shortlist six to seven fast bowlers and pick them for a tour by rotating them instead of going for a head hunting while selecting the team," Srinath said speaking at a symposium organised by Sports Journalists' Federation of India (SJFI) here.

The policy of selecting different medium pacers for different tours put pressure on the youngsters and creates instability in the fast bowling department, Srinath said.

"If we select the same bunch of medium pacers, the fast bowlers can work as a team and give results," he added.

"There is also an urgent need to have fair wickets in the country so that the up and coming medium pacers can bowl on them and get a feel of the different pitches they would bowl on while playing for the country in future," Srinath said at the symposium organised at Bombay Gymkhana.



INTERNATIONAL, Heraldtribune

The problem with being Ronaldo is finding time for a life, for tranquility, for something remotely like privacy.

At 28, he has been living a surreal and phenomenal existence since his 17th birthday and the birth that year of his international career for Brazil. The world moved into his life from that moment on, and when he scores or he sneezes, when he is on top of his game or struggling to be better than all the rest, the soap opera of world acclaim invades his space.

On Monday, Luiz Nazario de Lima Ronaldo was dropped from the Brazil squad that will face Paraguay in World Cup qualification this weekend, and Argentina on June 8.

He had asked for a holiday, and asked to be released from the Confederations Cup in Germany from June 15-29. He is sound in body, but disturbed in his soul following the breakup with his latest fiancée, Daniella Ciccarelli. The romance was world news; the breakup no less so.

Just three months ago, what Ronaldo and Ciccarelli called their "wedding" at a castle in Chantilly, near Paris, was attended by the glitterati of soccer, show biz and Ciccarelli's exotic world of modeling and television.

It was a Valentine's Day declaration of betrothal. Only the fact that their respective divorces had not been made final in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church and the lack of a French license prevented it from being a wedding.

We can usually tell from Ronaldo's form when his life is tranquil. He plays, perhaps as one of the greatest-ever goalscorers should, with the face of a child. He believes the ball is there to be put into the net, and he does it well.

Only Pele, with 77 goals in official internationals, has scored more for

Brazil than Ronaldo, who so far has 56. Ronaldo had lost two years to a knee injury that would have ended the career of a less determined, less boyishly optimistic character. He came back to score eight times at the 2002 World Cup - more than anyone else in the finals for more than a quarter of a century.

The two goals he scored against Germany to win the final entitle him to think that, even in Brazil where fabulous strikers emerge on a regular basis, he has a World Cup future.

He does. Carlos Alberto Parreira, the Brazil coach, sees Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Kaká as his three most precious talents. Yet he had no choice but to play it tough - or at least not to be seen by the pervasive Brazil media to make exception for Ronaldo.

"Nobody is irreplaceable," Parreira said. "They're quite welcome to stay at home if they don't want to play. In fact, it's better if they stay away, because otherwise they'll just get in the way of the others."

Adriano, the powerful Inter Milan striker, will play. Grafite of São Paulo has been summoned to the squad for the games against Paraguay and Argentina. Julio César of Sevilla will be there at the Confederations Cup once he has played in the Spanish Cup Final.

So Ronaldo, who said on Monday that he was prepared and ready to play in the two World Cup qualifiers but needed a rest and "a chance to forget about the things I've been through," has effectively been told that he cannot pick and choose his availability for national team duty.

"It would be great just to play the World Cup," Parreira said when he returned to Rio de Janeiro from watching three Brazilians in the Champions League final last week. "It would be great for me if I could just coach the team at World Cups and not have to worry about qualifiers and the friendlies where there is

a lot of wear and tear."

What was said between the coach and the player over the telephone will have been slightly different. Parreira is a kind of surrogate father to all the Ronaldos at his beck and call, and there is never an easy time to separate the individual needs and the collective purpose.

Parreira is waiting for Mario Zagallo, the coach who first included Ronaldo in a Brazil squad, to rejoin his staff after abdominal



RONALDO

surgery. Zagallo, 74, has been involved in four of Brazil's five World Cup triumphs.

"He's making an unbelievable recovery," Parreira said. "Knowing Zagallo, he will be with us in Argentina."

Yet, even before Ronaldo asked for permission to skip the Confederations Cup - which is an eight-nation rehearsal for next year's World Cup in Germany - the coach knew he faced a defining moment when his players gathered at Teresopolis, the mountain retreat where they train high above Rio.

"You have seen how Ronaldinho has risen in the world," Parreira said in Istanbul a week ago. "He is now

Depor part with long time coach

REUTERS, Madrid

Deportivo Coruna coach Javier Irureta is leaving by mutual agreement, the Primera Liga club announced on Tuesday.

The 57-year-old was the longest serving coach at a Spanish top-flight club, leading the modest Galician side to its first league title in 2000 and to King's Cup success in 2002 during his seven-year tenure.

After five consecutive seasons in the Champions League, however, they finished a disappointing eighth this year in the Primera Liga -- their worst placing since 1998.

"After seven years together we have met and decided, both of us, that now would be a good time to end the professional relationship between the club and the coach," Deportivo president Augusto Cesar Lendoiro told a news conference.

"But we want to stress that our relationship does not end here and that the door is always open for a possible return to the club in the future."

"We would like to thank him not only for the success he brought to the club, but also for the exemplary manner in which he has always conducted himself throughout his time here."

As to Irureta's possible replacement for next year, Lendoiro added: "I can assure you the club has not talked with anyone about the job. That would have shown a lack of respect."

Irureta, who confirmed the amicable nature of his departure, thanked everyone connected with the club.

the world No. 1 player. I cannot tell Ronaldinho anything about football.

"When we get together, this will be the first time that Ronaldo is less high in esteem than Ronaldinho. I have spent three days in Barcelona with Ronaldinho. He's so special there, he's king."

The ultimate test of management, assimilating both Ronnies and not allowing Ronaldo to sense that he is any the less special, is postponed. Time moves on, Adriano is growing, others might burst onto the team as irrepressibly as Ronaldo did in his teens.

The media crawl over every movement in and around the Brazil squad. And Daniella Ciccarelli, not the first and possibly not the last model in Ronaldo's life, has returned to her own pre-Ronaldo fame with the MTV channel in Rio.

Wind back the clock exactly one year. Brazil beat Argentina, 3-1, in World Cup qualification at Belo Horizonte. The home country hero was Ronaldo, Ronaldo and Ronaldo.

He scored all three goals, all from penalties because the Argentine defenders could not cope with his pace, his persistence, his sheer desire. We have not seen the last of it.

Totti till 2010

REUTERS, Rome

Italy striker Francesco Totti has signed a new deal which will keep him at AS Roma until 2010.

Totti's deal will earn the club captain 10.4 million euros (\$12.82 million) a year, the Serie A club said in a statement on Tuesday.

Earlier this week, Italy coach Marcello Lippi sprung a surprise when he left Totti out of his squad for Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Norway.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Bill where out there

4 Lab worker's deg.

7 Parody

12 She-bear (Sp.)

13 Discoverer's cry

14 Dickens title start

15 Moo goo gai pan

16 Bet collector

18 out a living

19 4-0, in the World Series

20 Ulrich of Metallica

22 Work unit

23 Owl's perch

27 Scull need

29 Bar-tender's device

31 Beyond improvement

34 Where the action is

35 Friend

37 Adj. modifier

38 Collections

39 Scrap

41 Some-where out there

45 D-Day beachhead

47 "The Greatest"

48 Custodian

52 Youngster

53 Out of sorts?

54 Tolkien tree creature

55 Previous night

56 Gentle souls

57 Rotation duration

58 Scale members

DOWN

1 Cover-up at the Watergate Hotel?

17 Frat party props

21 Drenches

23 Pupa's old status

Solution time: 25 mins.

HEW BUMP GLOB

ALT ASIA LOVE

WINDFALL ASEA

GOB DUE OESIENT

ERA ESP POWER

EGGS TEA WIRE

RESTIS ASH NIN

ROB PAIDDED

GIRASOL RIM

IRAN WINDPIPE

VOID EVIL LIT

ENDS RELY LEA

24 White House nickname

25 Chaps

26 Support system?

28 Malt beverage

30 Swindled

31 Mensa slats

32 Expected to arrive

33 Pack away

36 Della's "Touched by an Angel" co-star

37 Acropolis daily

40 Searched thoroughly through

42 Charlatan

43 Breathing

44 Carnival attractions

45 He gave a lift

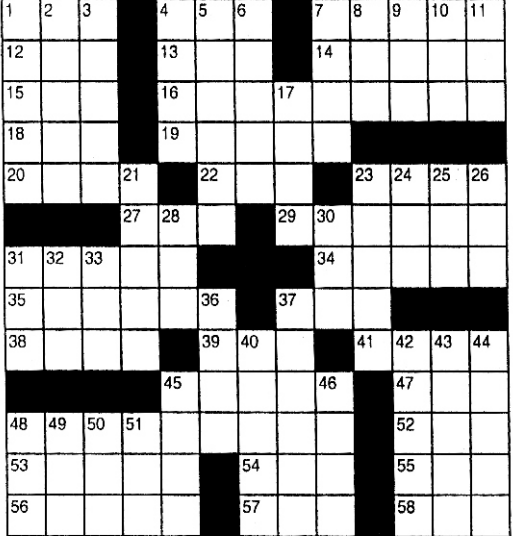
46 Bohemian

48 Western

49 Chicken-killing link

50 Edge

51 "Chicago" lyricist



CRYPTOQUIP

F I R M W J H V V Q U W M R ' G
F Q M I G S R U D L R Y R G G
X D V U R X H Y C D H L W C G W C

QA JWG GDXARMRI AJR SYDF.
Yesterday's Cryptokuip: BECAUSE I'M EATING SUCH A CRUNCHY CEREAL, COULD YOU SAY I'M CREATING SOUND BITES?

Today's Cryptokuip Clue: G equals S

The Cryptokuip 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.