

Murali set for return

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka recalled spinner Muttiah Muralitharan on Wednesday in naming a 14-man squad for the two-test series against West Indies.

The 33-year-old, returns for the first time since August last year after recovering from two shoulder operations.

Muralitharan, who has taken 532 wickets in 91 tests, missed series against South Africa, Pakistan and New Zealand during his absence, the longest layoff of his career.

Middle-order batsman Russel Arnold was also recalled after a year-long absence having impressed with Sri Lanka A.

Fast bowler Nuwan Zoysa returns after successful knee surgery and uncapped all-rounder Gayan Wijekoon has been picked for the first time.

Batsman Shantha Kalavittigoda (injured shoulder), fast bowler Nuwan Kulasekera (back injury), seamer Ruchira Perera and all rounder Farveez Maharoof have been left out.

The first test against a second-string West Indies side, missing key players because of a contract dispute, starts on July 13.

SQUAD

Marvan Atapattu (captain), Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Chaminda Vaas, Muttiah Muralitharan, Thilan Samaraweera, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russel Arnold, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Zoysa, Upul Chandana, Rangana Herath, Gayan Wijekoon.

Younis to play for Notts

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's vice-captain Younis Khan said Wednesday he would leave for a short stint with English county side Nottinghamshire later this month ahead of a Test series between the two countries.

"It's like a dream come true to play for an English county," said Younis, who has played 37 Tests and 118 one-day internationals since making his debut in 2000.

"I hope that it would benefit me to improve under English conditions as Pakistan will tour England next year."

During his five-week stay with Nottinghamshire 27-year-old Younis will replace New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming, who is due to lead his country's tour of Zimbabwe next month.

Younis was appointed vice-captain of Pakistan after his performance in Australia earlier this year. He also played well in India and the West Indies, where Pakistan drew Test series.

Pakistan's next international assignment is a home series against England starting in October this year.

Gerrard stays!

Football

REUTERS, London

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard executed a bewildering u-turn on Wednesday, telling the European champions he now wanted to stay at Anfield. Less than 24 hours ago Gerrard said he had made the toughest decision of his life to leave his first and only club six weeks after lifting the Champions League trophy in Istanbul.

"He wants to stay. He realises how much the club means to him," Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry told SkySports News. "I couldn't be more delighted."

Parry said that in a series of telephone calls he had apologised to Liverpool-born Gerrard for any misunderstandings about the club's desire to keep their talisman.

"We've cleared all of that and I don't think it will happen again. It hasn't been easy for him but as far

as we are concerned it is the right decision."

Parry indicated Gerrard had agreed to sign a new contract which could make him one of English soccer's highest-paid players, earning an estimated 100,000 pounds (\$175,500) a week.

The five-times European champions rejected a bid for the 25-year-old from Premier League champions Chelsea earlier this week. Newspapers reported Chelsea had bid a British record 32 million pounds (\$56.28 million).

Gerrard's change of mind is a carbon copy of the situation 12 months ago when the player appeared set to join Chelsea, only to follow his heart and stay with his hometown club.

"The last six weeks have been the toughest of my life and it's the hardest decision I have ever had to make," Gerrard had said on Tuesday.

"I fully intended to sign a new contract after the Champions League

final but the events of the last five or six weeks have changed all that."

Newspapers reported Gerrard had been upset by the slow pace of his contract negotiations since the Istanbul final.

Manager Rafael Benitez said on Monday he wanted the midfielder to stay at Liverpool for the rest of his career and believed he could even become the club's next manager.

Gerrard scored one goal and made another against AC Milan when Liverpool rallied from 3-0 down to reach 3-3 and a penalty shootout victory after extra time in the Champions League final.

Following the game he appeared to pledge his future to the club. "How can I leave after a night like this and all the nights this season?" he said in Istanbul.

Liverpool are preparing to face Welsh part-timers TNS in their Champions League first round qualifier on July 13.

Imran finds ECB right

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan cricket legend Imran Khan said Wednesday that England's refusal to play a Test in Karachi this winter was justified.

England said Tuesday they would not play a Test in the violence-prone city, but agreed to play a one-day international there and will decide in 10 days' time whether to play a second game as well.

"Until and unless the law and order situation was restored such things will happen," Imran, a former Pakistan captain who is now a politician in his homeland, told AFP.

"When England's security team was in Karachi the city mayor was quoted in newspaper as saying that local elections next months will see bloodshed and everyone took notice of it," said Imran.

"You can't blame the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) because in such a situation if they press for a Test in Karachi the whole tour might get jeopardised."

However cricket officials in Karachi vowed to protest the decision and hit out at the PCB for failing to argue the case for the country's largest city.

"England's refusal to play a Test in Karachi is disappointing and we would protest over it," Karachi City Cricket Association secretary Sirajul Islam Bukhari told AFP.

"The PCB has failed to plead the case of Karachi," Bukhari added.

"Karachi is a safe place and in a population of 15 million one or two incidents are common. Colombo in Sri Lanka staged international matches when there was unrest, so why not Karachi?"

Bukhari said Karachi staged the 1996 World Cup successfully even though there was a curfew in some parts of the city.

The three Tests proposed for the tour are now likely to take place in Lahore, Faisalabad and Multan while Lahore will also stage two one-day internationals. If England play only one limited-overs match in Karachi, then Rawalpindi will stage two.

Two England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) security experts spent last week assessing security at various grounds in Pakistan, and two senior English cricket officials visited this week.

Karachi has been rocked by a series of deadly shootings as well as a suicide bombing at a mosque and the burning down of a KFC restaurant earlier this year.

BU's 12-year

Brothers got their lone chance of the half three minutes from time when Emily snatched the ball from Ndem but the young striker's chip went out after kissing the top of the crossbar.

Just before the final whistle, Ndem was red carded by referee Mansoor Azad when the Cameroonian retaliated after a dangerous foul by Rikto.

Red card: Ndem (Abahani) Yellow cards: Prantotosh, Liton, Rikto (Brothers)

TEAMS Brothers: Tareq, Siraji, Sujan, Jewel, Parvez Babu, Abul, Prantotosh (Jahangir), Hicham (Rikto), Liton, Victor (tapu) and Emily.

Abahani: Anwar, Wali (Obaidur), Shawkat (Tipu), Pradeep, Shipon, Lajuk, Ndem, Joy (Parvez), Ujjal, Farhad and Ibrahim.

ODI rules put to test

More Anglo-Aussie rivalry begins today

Cricket

REUTERS, Headingley

England and Australia will add to cricketing history on Thursday in playing the first one-day international featuring substitutions and experimental fielding restrictions.

That novelty, however, is unlikely to deflect Michael Vaughan and Ricky Ponting from their main aim.

The Headingley match, the first of three one-dayers before the start of the Ashes next month, is yet another skirmish before the main battles ahead but will still provide more opportunities to probe for weaknesses while scoring psychological points.

Both captains know that the winners of the one-day series will be all but forgotten within a matter of weeks. It is the test matches that carry the status.

To date, England probably feel they have performed better than they expected against the world champions. The teams won one game each in their head-to-heads during a triangular series also involving Bangladesh, with a third encounter washed out, before playing out a dramatic tie in the Lord's final on Saturday.

Vaughan's one-day side are still very much work in progress and have come nowhere near to emulating the successes of the test team, who remained unbeaten throughout 2004. But to beat Australia and then to level a game in which they had been reduced to 33 for five chasing 197 to win suggests progress.

After the final, Australia fast bowler Glenn McGrath, normally as miserly with his compliments as he is at conceding runs, praised

England's new combative spirit, as well as lauding his opposite number Steve Harmison.

England coach Duncan Fletcher, also seeking long overdue positives, believes the Australian batsmen are showing signs of uncertainty, with Ponting's tendency to fall over to the on side and play across the line at the heart of their problems.

Australia coach John Buchanan, however, begs to differ. He suggested after the Lord's tie that Fletcher would do well to "reflect on how Trescottick has got out, how Strauss has got out, how Vaughan has got out through the course of the series so far with the test matches in mind".

Brett Lee, bowling at the top of his form and pace, and McGrath feel they have their measure.

Marcus Trescottick, whose immobile batting technique has been unpicked before by the Australians quicks, scored a century, a half-century and 43 against Bangladesh in the triangular series but failed to get to 20 in four starts against Australia.

Andrew Strauss is averaging 11.5 against the world champions. Vaughan has one half-century and one duck against them.

In truth, Vaughan and Ponting look as off-colour as each other. In the teams' only other meeting, a Twenty20 jamboree, Vaughan was out first ball while Ponting lasted three.

On Thursday, England and Australia will be allowed to make one substitution each at any stage. This is likely to help sides batting second, since most substitutes will be batsmen or batting all rounders and thus of little value to teams batting first, who need to keep their

bowlers.

There will also be 20 overs of fielding restrictions rather than 15, with 10 at the start of the innings and two more blocks of five overs each, to be introduced at the fielding captain's discretion.

The England and Australia captains, however, may have most of their attention on other things at Headingley -- on scoring psychological points and, also as important, on scoring a few runs into the bargain.

I was told

FROM PAGE 12

"Any team can sack a coach but the way they have thrown me out, I certainly did not deserve it. I have seen claims in the media today that the club had served a show-cause notice on me. That is not true. I was asked to submit a report about the club's recent performance. I gave it yesterday but it was not accepted."

"The authorities have described me as an undisciplined person but I am not like that. My relationship with the players is also very good contrary to the claims."

Manik also questioned the wisdom of the decision after he had taken the club to two finals this season one of which they won.

"The league is not over yet. I will never admit that I have failed this season," said Manik who led Muktijoddha to one National League, two Premier League and two Federation Cup titles apart from the triumph in the McDowell Cup in India.

Manik also demanded that Muktijoddha officials withdraw their allegations against him.

"They have hurt my feelings as well as damaging my reputation with baseless comments. They must withdraw these officially," demanded Manik who has been asked by the club to collect his dues within a week. Manik the highest-paid local coach, was reportedly under contract for a sum of six lakh this season. Muktijoddha are fourth in the ongoing Premier League at the moment.

This side and that side

FROM PAGE 13

summing up the agonising wait felt by the whole country ahead of the decision.

London, which also beat off Madrid, Moscow and New York after more than two years of campaigning, must now turn plans for a major overhaul of its rickety transport network and the construction of an Olympic Park into a reality.

But for the time being, organisers and the public were swept up with celebrating the news and toasting the London bid team, led by double Olympic medal winner Sebastian Coe, for its efforts to turn what was first considered a long-shot at the title into a genuine chance.

Pop singers such as Heather Small -- who performed the theme tune to the London bid, "Proud" -- Mel C -- formerly of the British pop sensation the Spice Girls -- and Rachel Stevens were due to perform at the so-called "Thank You" party, while a Samba band was also entertaining the crowds.

A separate party is being held in Stratford, east London, where an Olympic stadium will be built along with a host of additional sporting venues, transport links and other projects.

"It is wonderful it is fantastic for London," said Belinda Impey, 50, a lawyer in the city who was celebrating with the revellers at Trafalgar Square.

School children, many wearing "Make Britain Proud" T-shirts, sport fans, businessmen and women in suits and curious tourists joined in the festivities, which as well as Holmes, also featured former world 1500 metre champion and Olympic silver medalist Steve Cram.

On the other hand, French sports

stars were rocked Wednesday by the shock victory for London, but urged organisers of the failed bid and the French people to accept the decision.

Judo legend David Douillet, a four-time heavyweight world champion who won two Olympic golds (1996, 2000) and one bronze (1992), tried to take positives out of the failed Paris bid.

"I think the big lesson we can draw from this during the years of preparation is the popular support for a common project.

"Now, we have to know how to lose in dignity. We have to accept it," Douillet said, suggesting that the London bid team had perhaps crossed the line in their wooing of IOC members.

Guy Forget, the captain of France's Davis Cup tennis team, told RMC Radio: "I am terribly disappointed. I believed in it (the Paris bid) 200 per cent. I was convinced we were going to win... but there are parameters you can't control. Bravo to London."

Didier Deschamps, Monaco coach and World Cup winner as a player and captain of the French football team, added: "You just have to accept it, that's the Olympic way: fair play."

From the world of athletics, sprinter Christine Arron called the IOC vote "disgusting".

"I was motivated to go on until 2012 if it was Paris. I could have run the relay at 39 years of age. Now it's finished," said Arron, the European 100m record holder with 10.73sec and gold medal winner in the 4x100m relay in the 2003 world championships, held in Paris.

Messi the next big M?

Football

BARCELONA

There was hope in Argentina that in 18-year-old Lionel Messi, they have a player capable of making the decisive interventions in the way that Diego Maradona did, the BBC reports.

The significant fact is not that Argentina claimed the World Youth Cup in Holland - this, after all, is a competition that the South Americans have dominated in recent years.

What makes the 2005 triumph special is that it is the fruit of individual genius. Only 18, Messi practically won the championship on his own.

Diego Simeone pointed recently that while Argentina produces excellent players, Brazil produces stars - a thought that was on many Argentine minds as those four Brazilian goals went flying in during last week's final of the Confederations Cup in Frankfurt.

But after Saturday's triumph, in which Messi converted two penalties, Argentine football now has its own star.

Messi's contributions in Holland were as decisive, and as thrilling, as that of Diego Maradona in the 1986 World Cup.

Argentina had to get through four tough knockout games to lift the trophy, and against Colombia, Spain, Brazil and Nigeria.

In each game it was the same story. Messi tipped the balance.

In this age of physically, Messi looks a most unlikely footballer.

He looks more like the pigeon-toed runt of the litter - until he gets the ball.

He has all the skills - fluency and balance, a superb left foot, the ability and confidence to try the unexpected.

He also has a football brain. As Spain coach Inaki Saez said after Messi eliminated his side: 'He sees on the pitch what others only see from the stands.'

Messi's combination of individual talent, collective sense and cool temperament justify the hope that he will blossom into one of the game's greats.

He has already made the move to one of the giants of European football - in unusual circumstances.

At the age of 13 he went to Spain in search of treatment for a hormonal problem which was preventing his bones from growing properly.

Barcelona were tipped off about his potential, and club stalwart Carlos Rexach went to have a look.

club. Messi has since extended his contract with Barcelona through 2010.

The pressure will now be on for him to be fast-tracked into Argentina's senior side.

National team coach Jose Pekerman has announced his intention to bring Messi along slowly but there is a clear case for taking the youngster to next year's World Cup, if only to gain experience.

Argentina are currently built around the playmaking of Roman



LIONEL MESSI

'I snapped him up in half a minute,' Rexach recalls, 'and the first contract was signed symbolically on a serviette.'

As he developed at Barca, Messi was offered a place in the Spanish youth side.

He turned it down.

'I told them I'm an Argentine, from Rosario, and a leper,' he said - referring not to another medical condition but to the nickname of supporters of the Newells Old Boys

Riquelme, a wonderful passer of the ball, who nevertheless has a tendency to blow hot and cold.

After the Confederations Cup Pekerman admitted that he needed to work on some variations to cover those days when Riquelme is blowing cold.

Next year in Germany he will surely be reassured to glance along the substitutes' bench and let his eyes settle on Messi's impish face. (Internet Source)

Robinho refuses to train with Santos

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Disgruntled Brazil striker Robinho missed training with his club Santos again on Tuesday, the day after the club re-affirmed that they would not sell him to Real Madrid.

"The agreement was that Robinho would turn up this Tuesday but he didn't," coach Gallo told reporters.

"We've passed the situation to the board of directors and it's up to the president to take measures." On Monday, Robinho was ordered to resume training as Santos said that any team wanting to buy him before the end of his contract in 2008 must pay a \$50 million penalty.

The 21-year-old, who also missed Sunday's Brazilian championship match at home to Juventude, said last Wednesday that he had spoken to Real and wanted to join them.

His comments came at the end of the Confederations Cup, where he played for Brazil in all five games on their way to winning the competition.

His also missed club practice on Friday and Saturday.

Robinho said on Monday that Real had offered \$25 million for him and that he was not in the right frame of mind to play in Brazil.

Meanwhile, the thwarted dream of Robinho to go at once with Real, has caused him a depression, said Tuesday his agent Wagner Ribeiro.

Ribeiro's remarks comes in contrast with the versions of the local sports press with the photo of Robinho, published Monday, showing him happy with friends playing on the street, while at the same time his team, Santos had troubles to draw without goals with Juventude in the 10th round of the Brazilian championship.

In talking about the situation of the



ROBINHO

striker, Ribeiro said Tuesday "Robinho does not sleep and is depressed."

He also said the problem that hinders the agreement between Santos and Real is not money.

Robinho's agent reminded that the bidding of Real Madrid is the highest in the history of the Brazilian soccer.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 38 Minimal change export 41 Prune 43 Resort 44 Jai 4 PC 4 follower 45 Convention center? 47 Milan attraction 49 Sponsorship 7 "An field of study 52 EWR info 53 Sun. 16 Ritchie Valens hit 54 Cyclist 18 Unilateral 20 "Cheers" supply 21 Either of AT&T's T's 23 Teen's woe 24 Appointments 25 "Mayday!" 27 Withdraw 29 Role on "Taxi" or "Seinfeld" 31 Wood of speed-reading fame 35 Year-end rendition 37 Je ne — quoi

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-57 indicating starting positions for clues.

CRYPTOQUIP

D A D P F Y B Y E O O K C Z .

O E W F Y D C P E W M E N F Y M I O A

H E O A F P D U K Z O K Z C :

" A T F U I B N O A E H O T F Y F . "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOU DISCOVER A NEW TYPE OF PAINTING, I RECKON YOU'VE HAD A STROKE OF GENIUS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals E

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