



A baseball ball has exactly 108 stitches, a cricket ball has between 65 and 70 stitches.



Nasser Hussain
(Former England cricket captain)
"For me, Gilchrist is one of the great-
est ever, and that is a huge state-
ment. He has changed the way
cricket is played; whatever game it is,
he picks his bat up and tries to hit it."



CA-BCCI work out new Test & ODI cycles

PTI, Kolkata

Cricket Australia (CA) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) have agreed to a four-year cycle for Tests and two-year cycle for one-day internationals between the two countries.

Disclosing this, Cricket Australia's Chairman Bob Merriman told newsmen that as per the new agreement the two teams would play four Tests against each other every four years.

"Similarly, India and Australia will play a five-ODI series every two years," Merriman said.

He said efforts are now on to fit this schedule into International Cricket Council's six-year programme.

This matter is likely to be discussed at a meeting in Dubai in mid-August.

"If we get the go ahead from the ICC, then the blueprint for the proposal will get the official seal in October," he said.

Asked about Australia's preparation for the 2007 World Cup in West Indies, Merriman said "the World

SL is double trouble



BISHWAJIT ROY

It was still hard for Dav Whatmore to accept that his father was no more but being a true professional that he is, the Bangladesh coach was however determined to carry on with his life as a cricket coach.

"It is a very terrible situation for me because my father's presence was immense in my life. Even at the age of 91 he was strong enough to inspire me in everything that I did. Actually, we are a very close-knit family," said an emotion-choked Whatmore, who was Davellene Clifford's only son.

The Australian had to leave for Melbourne midway through the Tigers' tour of England to be at his ailing father's bedside, but the team's mentor received a small piece of consolation with the way his charges finished their demanding England tour.

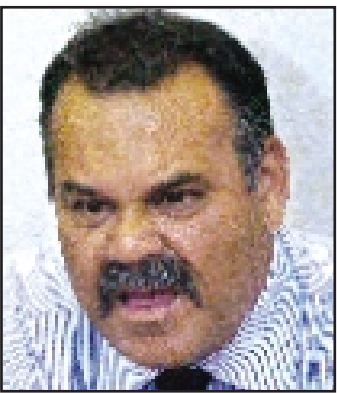
Whatmore's father died on June 25.

The 51-year-old, who returned to Dhaka on Friday, told journalists at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Gulshan office yesterday he was preparing to concentrate on his next assignment -- September's tour of Sri Lanka.

"I had a long association with Sri

Lankan cricket. I have an intimate knowledge of how they like to play cricket and their approach towards the game. I will share my experience with the boys and I can only say that preparations will be as meticulous as possible," said Whatmore, who was the architect of the Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup victory.

But he warned his players to be ready for a big challenge during their



DAV WHATMORE

25-day first full series in the islands.

"We have to be able to face two things; counter the swing bowling of Chaminda Vaas otherwise we'll have the same problems we faced against India's Irfan Pathan at home last December. And secondly, we have to handle champion off-

spinner Muttiah Muralitharan. We don't want to take other bowlers lightly but essentially their attack revolves around Vaas as Murali," he informed.

Whatmore didn't rule out one or two upsets during the three-match one-day and two-match Test series.

"Yes, we are here to do that but one thing is for sure Sri Lanka will be careful against Bangladesh after the glorious victory against Australia. But we also have an advantage that we're going to play in familiar conditions," he said.

Sharing his thoughts on the England tour, which saw the Tigers lose both Tests in two days, Whatmore felt that overall it was a worthwhile experience.

"It was a very tough tour but in the end we finished on a positive note. The objective in any tour is to improve along the way. This was a very important winning curve for Bangladesh," he said.

The Bangladesh coach was not ready to blame anybody for their poor showing in the Test series rather he pointed to playing cricket in early summer conditions and no luck with the coin as causes for the debacle.

"If you look at the other countries who toured there they had to tour three to four times before they had pulled off a victory. In our case we

SEE PAGE 13 COL 8

Arif holds Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Late strikes from Arif helped promotees Dipali Jubo Sangha hold Arambagh Krira Sangha 2-2 in the Premier Bank Premier Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Table-bottomers Dipali came from two goals behind in the first half, thanks to Arif's strikes within one minute at the stroke of the final whistle, to split points with their mighty opponents.

Striker Arif slammed in the first goal with a left-footer and then lobbed in a left-footer from outside the box to present his team a point.

Arambagh finished seventh after the first-leg securing ten points from nine matches while Dipali pushed their tally to two points from same number of outings.

The first-leg finishes today with the Brothers Union-Sheikh Russel match at the same venue. Defending champions Brothers were breathing under the neck of leaders Moha-mmedan (23) with 19 points from 8 matches while last year's runners-up Russel have 11 points from same number of matches.

In the day's match, Arambagh's Ghanaian recruit Ghansha put his team ahead converting a penalty in the 39th minute and after four minutes Murshed headed home a Kallol left-side cross to double the margin.



PHOTO: STAR

Action from yesterday's Premier Bank Premier Football League clash between Dipali Sangha and Arambagh Krira Sangha at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

Foreigners killing Dhaka football, says Kottan

BSS, Dhaka

Former Bangladesh football coach George Kottan yesterday said too many foreign players in the domestic league was hampering the development of the local game.

"Three foreign players per Premier League team is too much it is hampering the development of country's football. Besides, it is reducing local players' opportunities to flourish.

"How can you develop your football pushing your promising footballers into the sidelines?"

He also blamed that Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for killing local talent by allowing so many substandard foreign players into the top domestic league.

"I haven't seen any promising players emerge over the last two years. I can't name a single local player who has impressed me so far."

Mohakhali beat Dhanmondi

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohakhali Ekadash defeated bottom-side Dhanmondi Club 3-1 in the First Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Murali back with a bang

Lanka thrash Windies by 6 wickets



AFP, Colombo

Muttiah Muralitharan grabbed 6-36 on his return to international cricket after almost a year as Sri Lanka thumped the weakened West Indies by six wickets in the first cricket Test here on Saturday.

The off-spinner, out of action for 11 months due to a shoulder injury, led Sri Lanka's victory march in their

150th Test match with his 45th haul of five wickets or more in an innings.

Seamer Chaminda Vaas chipped in with 4-15 as Sri Lanka skittled out the second-string West Indies for 113 in their second knock in the morning session of the fourth day.

Set a modest target of 172, the hosts survived a Jermaine Lawson scare to romp home after tea and take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Fast bowler Lawson removed

Sanath Jayasuriya (15) and Kumar Sangakkara off successive deliveries and then dismissed captain Marvan Atapattu (28) to reduce Sri Lanka to 49-3.

All three batsmen fell to brilliant diving catches by Xavier Marshall at point, Sylvester Joseph in the slips and teenaged wicketkeeper Denesh Ramdin.

But the fourth-wicket pair of Mahela Jayawardena and Thilan Samaraweera put on 86 to dampen West Indian hopes of pulling off an extraordinary upset.

Samaraweera hit 51 before he was trapped leg-before by Lawson, who finished with four wickets in each innings.

Jayawardena remained unbeaten on 41 as Tillakaratne Dilshan (30 not out) smashed Tino Best through the covers for the winning boundary.

It was Sri Lanka's first Test match at home since the tsunamis ravaged the island nation seven months ago and marked Australian Tom Moody's successful debut as national coach.

"We were playing at home after a long time and to come back and win after conceding the first innings lead is really remarkable," said Atapattu.

"We took some time to settle down in this Test and there were a few hiccups on the way especially when we lost three quick wickets today.

"But we back ourselves to come out of such situations.

"I regard Muralitharan as the best bowler in the world and it was great to see him back. As for Vaas, he has performed admirably over the years and is always there when the chips are down," the Sri Lankan captain said.

Vaas was named man of the match for his seven wickets and a

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

Selectors to decide on Sourav issue

PTI, Kolkata

The Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI) in India on Saturday directed the national selection committee to take a decision on whether to include banned Sourav Ganguly in the squad for the tri-series in Sri Lanka later this month.

The latest development puts the onus on the five selectors to handle what appears to be a highly tricky situation with ICC Dispute Resolution Commissioner Justice Albie Sachs unlikely to give a final ruling before the team departs for Sri Lanka.

"It will be decided by the chairman of the selection committee," BCCI president Ranbir Singh Mahendra told reporters here.

BCCI secretary SK Nair also had a similar comment. "We have directed the selectors to decide on t

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

Hamid, Bidyut to receive SAF medals

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) will hand over the ninth SAF Games silver medals to two Bangladeshi weightlifters -- Bidyut Kumar Roy and Hamidul Islam -- at a simple ceremony at the BOA meeting room on Tuesday.

Hamidul Islam and Bidyut Kumar won bronze medals in the 62-Kg and 94-Kg weight categories respectively in the Islamabad Games last year. But later they were declared as silver medal winners after the Games authority stripped the original winners of their medals following positive drugs tests.

England have to bat to Ashes: Dravid, Kumble



AFP, London

India stars Rahul Dravid and Anil Kumble have said England's batsmen must rise to the challenge of taking on Australia's much-vaunted attack if they are to have a chance of regaining the Ashes.

Dravid, who averages more than 50 in Tests against Australia, is well aware of the size of the task confronting England as they contemplate trying to end a run of eight successive Ashes series defeats.

But both he and leg-spinner Kumble said runs on the board were

vital if the likes of England fast bowler Stephen Harmison and pace-bowling all-rounder Andrew Flintoff were to have a chance of imposing themselves on the tourists.

"Australia have a group of the greatest bowlers in the game. Having bowlers of this calibre at the same time makes it especially hard to score runs," the stylish Dravid told Wisden Cricketer magazine.

"They are all attacking bowlers.

Glenn McGrath does bowl in a restrictive sense, but in their own way, each is an attacking bowler.

"This will give opportunities to score runs if you are positive in strokeplay, in attitude and mindset. Australia bowl a good line and

length for sustained spells. They don't give you much. This makes it crucial to cash in on all scoring opportunities."

Dravid said Australia's preference for playing three quicks alongside leg-spin great Shane Warne could also work in England's favour.

"Australia will play with only four bowlers but in the past they had a Steve or a Mark Waugh to fill in. This time around they don't have an extra medium-pace option within the batsmen, which means their main four will have to do all the bowling, and that could take a toll.

"England must, especially in the early part of the series, keep

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Series on Warne's mind



AFP, Sydney

English cricket fans will be hoping that Shane Warne is spinning one of his wrong'unns when he vows his tumultuous personal life won't prevent him from again torturing England in this Ashes series.

After all, the legendary Australian leg-spinner has been bamboozling England's batsmen ever since bowling the 'ball of the century' to dismiss Mike Gatting at Old Trafford on the 1993 tour.

In his three tours to England, the 35-year-old marvel has snared 89 wickets in 17 Tests. Overall, he has taken 132 English wickets in 26 Tests at an average of 23.03.

So revered is Warne in England

that his is only the third portrait of an Australian cricketer to hang in the venerable Long Room at Lord's along with late greats Donald Bradman and Keith Miller.

The 'Sheikh of Tweak' is Test cricket's leading wicket-taker with 583 at 25.51 in 123 Tests and is almost certainly on his fourth and last Ashes tour.

Wisden Cricketers' Almanack acclaimed Warne among their five cricketers of the 20th Century.

Awane is in the midst of traumatic marriage break-up blamed on several highly-publicised affairs with women which reportedly occurred since he moved to England to play for Hampshire three months ago.

His wife, Simone, and three children have since returned to Melbourne, but Warne has assured

Australian fans he won't allow his personal life to impact on his performance during the Ashes.

The fall-out has been damaging back home.

Kerry Packer's Channel Nine ripped up his lucrative 11-year contract with the broadcaster because of his off-field indiscretions while one columnist demanded that he "should never again be allowed to debase the Australian colours by wearing them."

"It's obviously been a tough time for me, I don't think that's any secret," Warne said in the lead-up to the series.

"My major focus is on the Ashes series. One of my strengths as a cricketer over the years has been the ability to overcome any obsta-

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

Milestone at Lord's



AFP, Sydney

Glenn McGrath is poised to join cricket's bowling greats with his 500th wicket during the opening Ashes Test against England.

The 35-year-old Australian pace-man, with the metronomic line and length, goes into the Lord's Test on 499 and on the verge of becoming only one of four bowlers in Test cricket history to capture 500 wickets. Only compatriot Shane Warne (583), Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (532) and West Indian Courtney Walsh (519) have more Test wickets than McGrath.

"As a cricketer, there is no better place (than Lord's) to take a major milestone like 500 wickets," said McGrath, who has revelled in his two previous Ashes series in England with 68 wickets in 11 Tests.

The top-ranked Test bowler has spearheaded Australia's new-ball attack since his Test debut against New Zealand coming in for Merv Hughes in November 1993 and will make his 110th Test appearance at Lord's.

McGrath is not particularly fast nor can he be termed intimidating,

but the man they call 'Pigeon' is renowned for his miserly accuracy.

His career Test bowling average of 21.23 and an economy rate of 2.49 runs per over is only bettered by West Indian pace spearheads Curtly Ambrose (20.99) and Malcolm Marshall (20.95) among the pantheon of fast bowling greats.

Aligned with his disciplined line and length McGrath has made it his objective to target the best batsmen in the opposing team to undermine their confidence.

McGrath's all-time favourite batting 'bunny' was former England captain and opening batsman Michael Atherton, whom he dismissed 19 times.

In this Ashes series, McGrath is zeroing in on England's openers, Marcus Trescothick and Andrew Strauss, having had great success against them along with England skipper Michael Vaughan in the lead-up one-day matches.

Already McGrath has snared Trescothick's wicket four times in Tests.

"He still holds a spell over Marcus Trescothick and I am sure that Trescothick is aware of his shortcomings against this sort of bowling," former England captain and now television commentator

Bob Willis said recently.

This will be McGrath's third and last Ashes tour to England after he fought back from a career-threatening ankle injury which forced him to have two operations in 2003.

"The ankle is great again. I had three spurs on the ankle. One of them was removed but if I had the other two taken off, I would have been out for too long," McGrath recalled.

"Before the operations I couldn't put my front foot down as well as I liked and I had been trying to get there for the previous two years."

Some will point to Adam Gilchrist as Australia's series trump card, with his whirlwind batting at number seven, but McGrath and leg-spin wizard Shane Warne are indispensable to the Australian attack.

"If you want to talk about the fundamental difference between Australia and England you've just got to look at Warne and McGrath, with a thousand Test match wickets (between them), and then you go wherever you want to go," former Australian Test wicket-keeper Rodney Marsh said ahead of the series.

England beat Australia in the fifth

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5