

Tendulkar boost

AFP, Mohali

Batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar on Friday returned to the India squad for this month's home one-day series against Sri Lanka after recovering from an elbow injury.

Tendulkar, the world's leading one-day batsman with 13,642 runs, was forced to skip triangular tournaments in Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe this season because of the injury. He played his last one-day international in April against Pakistan at home.

India will be looking to their talisman to strike early form after he resumed competitive cricket this week, playing three matches in the domestic Challenger Series tournament here in northern India.

Fast bowler Sree Santh is the only newcomer in the 15-member squad announced for the opening two matches.

Sri Lanka will play seven one-dayers, the first beginning at Nagpur on October 25.

The Indian team will be led by middle-order batsman and long-time vice captain Rahul Dravid, who was appointed to take over from an unfit Sourav Ganguly on Thursday.

Chief selector Kiran More said that Ganguly, also suffering from a tennis elbow injury, would be reassessed on October 17 and could be considered for selection for the remaining matches of the series.

One-day specialist Mohammad Kaif was ruled out of the first two games due to a hamstring injury, sustained while fielding in the Challenger Series final here on Thursday.

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble, middle-order batsman Venkatesh Laxman, and pacemen Ashish Nehra and Zaheer Khan also failed to find a place in the squad.

Indian squad for first two one-dayers: Rahul Dravid (capt), Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Venugopal Rao, Suresh Raina, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Harbhajan Singh, Murali Kartik, Irfan Pathan, Ajit Agarkar, Jai Prakash Yadav, Sree Santh, Gautam Gambhir, Rudra Pratap Singh.

Another defeat for HP Squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal hit 88 but it was not good enough for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) High Performance Squad to prevent a 6-wicket defeat in a rain-interrupted limited-overs game against their Sri Lankan counterparts at the R Premadasa Stadium yesterday.

The Bangladesh development side amassed 269-5 in 50 overs after being sent into bat first. Captain Mushfiqur Rahim (46 not out), Shohrawardi Shuvo (33) and Shamsur Rahman (33) were the other notable scorers.

The home side were given a reduced target under the Duckworth-Lewis method and got there for the loss of four wickets.

The home side arranged two back-to-back one-day games to make up for the rain-ruined second four-day encounter which saw no play on the first two days.

Buchanan stays on

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia (CA) said Friday it had re-appointed John Buchanan as Australian team coach to a new contract through to after the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies.

Buchanan's contract with CA was due to expire this month but there has been a raging debate over his influence on the Australian team during the recent 2-1 Ashes series loss to England.

One of Buchanan's fiercest critics has been former Australian Test captain and now television commentator Ian Chappell, who urged skipper Ricky Ponting to seek guidance from senior players rather than Buchanan.

"Before the next World Cup we want to get the Ashes back so John will be in control to give him an opportunity to turn around what happened in England this year," CA chairman Bob Merriman said at the announcement during the Super Test here Friday.

A six-man committee, chaired by former Test captain Allan Border, is reviewing the state of the game in Australia at the behest of CA.

"They have not completed that review, but we thought it was important at this time regarding the renewal of John Buchanan's coaching contract and we will be making further statements on the outcome of the review commitment in due course," Merriman said.

Buchanan, 52, said he was relieved and happy with the conclusion of negotiations over his renewed contract and thanked the support of the players and CA.

PREVIEW: PRIMERA LIGA

Real sweat on Ronaldo

Football

AFP, Madrid

Brazilian ace Ronaldo, who has been the most decisive player for Real Madrid since joining the club in 2002-2003, is facing a race to be fit for this weekend's derby date with Atletico Madrid after suffering a leg injury in his country's World Cup qualifying win over Venezuela on Wednesday.

Ronaldo scored in the 3-0 win which saw the five-times world champions come top of the South American group after Argentina's loss to Uruguay but complained of pain in his quadriceps muscles as he reported back for Real training.

Real were set to give him a fitness test Friday morning to determine if he would really be potentially to fire Real to the top of the table after the club's recent resurgence in La Liga.

The club are currently third, two points behind surprise early leaders Getafe while Atletico are in mid-table.

Ronaldo has scored five goals already in six games of the Liga for Real and finished top-scorer in the South American qualifiers with 10. The man dubbed the 'phenomenon' was also in the short-list of 30 announced by FIFA on Thursday for the World Player of the Year award, a laurel he has already bagged a record three times along with Real Madrid mate Zinedine Zidane.

Real's derbies with Barcelona are watched around the world but the battles between Real and Atletico have almost the same global appeal. And the clash at Atletico's Vicente Calderon stadium comes with both teams having something to prove.

Real would want to continue their good run after a shaky start to the season

and notch up their fourth consecutive league victory.

"We're on a winning streak at the moment so we want it to continue," said Real playmaker Jose Maria 'Guti' Gutierrez on Thursday.

"In the last few years, whether we've played well or badly, we always seem to come away from the Calderon with something," added the player whose continued absence from the the Spanish national team remains a mystery to many.

By contrast, Atletico hauled themselves out of the relegation zone after their 2-0 win at Malaga two weeks ago and coach Carlos Bianchi is keen to prove that his team have the credentials to continue their rise and challenge for a place in Europe.

"In a derby, there isn't any favourites, regardless of where it is played," said Atletico striker Maxi Rodriguez.

"The key to beating Real is not to let them have any space. They have fast and clever players, if we give them a metre or two then we are going to suffer," added Rodriguez, who will be joined up front by former Chelsea striker Mateja Kezman.

Kezman is rapidly establishing himself as the deadliest striker in Spanish club football after Ronaldo.

The Serb added to his reputation on Wednesday with the only goal in Serbia and Montenegro's 1-0 win over Bosnia which sealed his country's automatic qualification for next summer's World Cup finals.

David Beckham will also be in Germany but his joy at England qualifying was tempered by Real's midweek demand that he return to Spain to train as he was suspended for the match against Poland.

England won 2-1 despite their captain's absence and Beckham is known to have been unhappy at Real's attitude as he wanted to be in the stands supporting

his international colleagues.

Like Real and Atletico, most Spanish first division clubs were eagerly awaiting the return of their top players on Thursday, following the World Cup fixtures of the last week, to take stock of the bumps and bruises.

However, Madrid's third top flight club, the surprise league leaders Getafe had no such worries as the unbeaten side from the southern suburbs of the Spanish capital had no one in international action.

Getafe go to Real Betis on Sunday with their first choice midfielder Fabio Celestini sidelined for at least another week with a slight muscle tear in his left thigh.

Second-placed Celta Vigo have a tricky trip to Osasuna on Sunday.

Reigning Spanish champions Barcelona, who are currently fifth, travel to Deportivo la Coruna Saturday with the Catalan club's striker Samuel Eto'o vowing to redeem himself after Cameroon's World Cup failure last weekend.

"I have been to two World Cups and I would have loved to have gone to a third, it's the biggest celebration of football in the world so I'll have to make up for missing out with some club achievements," said Eto'o.

FIXTURES

Saturday (kick off times in GMT): Alaves v Villarreal (1600), Deportivo La Coruna v Barcelona (1800), Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid (2000)
Sunday: Real Betis v Getafe (1500), Real Zaragoza v Real Sociedad (1500), Real Mallorca v Racing Santander (1500), Osasuna v Celta Vigo (1500), Valencia v Malaga (1700), Espanyol v Cadiz (1700), Athletic Bilbao v Sevilla (1900)

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Davies' ideal chance

Football

AFP, London

Kevin Davies could not have a better opportunity to prove his case that he can be the target man England should take to next summer's World Cup.

The Bolton striker, who made waves this week by claiming he was better equipped to do that job than Liverpool's Peter Crouch, goes head-to-head with England centre-back John Terry on Saturday as Chelsea seek to extend their perfect start to the Premiership season to nine matches.

England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson has earmarked Crouch as his back-up to first choice strikers Michael Owen and Wayne Rooney, arguing that his height gives the national team a valuable extra option.

Davies, 28, believes he can provide a similar dimension in terms of aerial power and the ability to unsettle defenders, and is clearly miffed at having being overlooked by Eriksson.

"I feel I can do that job the same, if not better than Peter Crouch," he claimed. "If England are playing Crouch, they are obviously looking to play the way we do at Bolton sometimes."

"I would love a cap and I used to think my time would come, but I honestly don't think that will happen now - it would probably take about seven or eight injuries."

Davies did a good job of unsettling Chelsea's defence in the corresponding fixture last season, which ended in a 2-2 draw, and is confident Bolton can take something from Saturday's match.

"We are not going to go down there, sit back for 90 minutes and hold out," he said. "We will try to get amongst them and get something out of the game."

"It is an extra incentive knowing we could be the first team to take some points off them. But we have a good record against them. We know we can get a result down there - and so do they."

Bolton's Nigerian playmaker Jay-Jay Okocha remains sidelined with a groin injury while Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho is likely to be without Shaun Wright Phillips and Damien Duff, both of whom returned from international duty with injuries.

Chelsea go into Saturday's match nine points clear of their nearest chasers, Charlton and Tottenham.

Arsenal, who travel to West Brom, have slipped to 11 points adrift of the champions and the Gunners' prospects of closing the gap has not been helped by a deepening injury crisis.

Sol Campbell will miss Saturday's match with the hamstring injury that forced him to sit out England's midweek win over Poland and his international colleague Ashley Cole is out for up to two months with a broken foot.

Midfielder Alexander Hleb sustained a knee problem while on duty with Belarus while Brazilian Gilberto and injured captain Thierry Henry, who is close to a comeback, are both set to miss the week-end trip to The Hawthorns.

Manchester United are also afflicted by injury woes with manager Sir Alex Ferguson set to hand young full-back Phil Bardsley his first Premiership start at Sunderland.

Kieran Richardson, who was injured while on England duty, has joined Gary

Neville, Gabriel Heinze, Wes Brown and Quinton Fortune on the sidelines, leaving Ferguson with little option but to turn to the 20-year-old.

Wayne Rooney, so impressive for England against Poland, is set to lead United's charge as he will be able to rest next week, when he is suspended for the Champions League match against Lille.

Ferguson is expected to stick with the combination of Ryan Giggs and Park Ji-sung on the left and right flanks respectively, following their effective display in the win over Fulham two weeks ago.

Park believes he has now adapted to the pace of Premiership football following his summer move from PSV Eindhoven.

"The game is quick in Holland but it is even quicker here and the games are more physical too, but I feel I'm getting used to it now," the Korean international said.

Liverpool, with only seven points from their first six matches, look to be out of the title race already, particularly after their 4-1 home defeat by Chelsea in their last Premiership outing.

Rafael Benitez's side will try to pick up the pieces at home to Blackburn on Saturday.

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT unless stated)
Saturday: Chelsea v Bolton, Liverpool v Blackburn, Sunderland v Manchester Utd, Tottenham v Everton, Middlesbrough v Portsmouth (1615 GMT), West Brom v Arsenal, Wigan v Newcastle (1145 GMT)
Sunday: Birmingham v Aston Villa (1100GMT), Manchester City v West Ham (1500 GMT)
Monday: Charlton v Fulham (1900 GMT)

Fergie not amused

AFP, London

Sir Alex Ferguson has delivered a withering blast at Sepp Blatter after the FIFA President told the Manchester United boss to crack down on Wayne Rooney's indiscipline.

Blatter's intervention came on Thursday, with the most powerful man in world football calling for Ferguson and England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson to get tough with the teenager and even joking: "I wouldn't say you have to beat him... but maybe a little."

The comments clearly got under Ferguson's skin.

"Sepp Blatter is a very influential person who says many things and people do listen to him," the Scot said on Friday.

"Some of those things are very interesting and worthwhile, particularly when he is talking about club ownership because there is a concern for everyone there."

"We also hear talk that certain clubs are signing up 30 African-born boys at a time. That should be a concern as well."

"These are major issues which I don't think FIFA ever take up. They seem quite happy to take up smaller issues, like talking about a 19-year-old Manchester United player, rather than pursue the really important issues in the game."

Blatter has infuriated Ferguson before when he claimed United Rio Ferdinand was fortunate to receive only an eight-month ban for missing a drugs test.

Karembou signs off

AFP, Paris

French World Cup winner Christian Karembou on Thursday announced his retirement from football.

The 34-year-old, who was part of France's 1998 World Cup winning team, told RMC radio: "I've decided it's time to stop, although I'll be having a kickabout from time to time."

Karembou, a native of the French overseas territory of New Caledonia in the Pacific, failed to sign with a new club following his departure from French side Bastia in June after the club was relegated to the second division.

He added: "I've no regrets, it's a decision I've thought long and hard about. I just want to try something else."

Karembou first emerged at Nantes as a defender at the start of the 1990s before joining Italian side Sampdoria. He also had spells at Real Madrid and Olympiakos among other clubs.

He won 53 caps as a France international and scored one goal, in October 1995 in a 3-1 win against Romania.

So unlike Bashar

FROM PAGE 12

BIMAN V JAMUNA

Biman thrived on two half-centuries by Nazmus Suddat and out of favour national all-rounder Mushfiqur Rahman to amass 250 for seven in their share of 50 overs after opting to bat.

Opener Nazmus slammed seven boundaries in a 98-ball 69 while Mushfiqur was unbeaten on almost run-ball 55. It included two fours and as many sixes. Humayun Kabir (35) and Mehrab Hossain (30) were the other notable scorers.

Right-arm pacer Mohammad Sharif then destroyed the as they bankers finished on 188-9. Sharif captured four for 42 in 10 overs while left-arm spinner Mosharaf Hossain picked up three for 26.

ARAF V SECURITY AIR

Formidable Araf struggled to make 184-8 in 50 overs but it was enough to clip the wings of Security Air Express who were bundled out for 119 in 44.1 overs.

National wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud hit highest 49 for Araf while Nayeem Islam added 47. Shafaq Al Jaber, Ehsanul Haque and Ahsanullah Hasan captured two wickets each to dismiss Security Air.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ACME: 216 all out in 49.5 overs (Hannan 20, Javed 62, Rafique 34, Bashar 26, Faruq 41 not out; Sabbir 3-63).

METRO REAL: 118 all out in 39.4 overs (Moniruzzaman 42; Hasibul 2-29, Alamgir 2-11, Dollar 2-18).

Result: Acme won by 98 runs.

BIMAN: 250-7 in 50 overs (Saddat 69, Humayun 35, Mehrab 30, Mushfiqur 55 not out; Shamim 2-47, Murad 3-37).

JAMUNA: 188-9 in 50 overs (Al-Mamun 29, Sumon 31; Sharif 4-42, Mosharaf 3-26, Niaz 2-33).

Result: Biman won by 62 runs.



PHOTO: STAR

Newly appointed Mohammedan football coach Shafiqul Islam Manik (L) chats with players and official of the team at the club premises on Friday.

'It's a privilege'

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Rahul Dravid said Friday he was "honoured and privileged" to be named India's new cricket captain, ending Sourav Ganguly's five-year reign as the country's most successful skipper.

The selection committee in Mohali on Thursday named Dravid, 32, captain for a series of seven limited-overs internationals against Sri Lanka and five one-dayers against South Africa at home from October 25 to November 28.

"It is an honour and a privilege to have been named as captain of India for the next two series," Dravid said after playing for the World XI on the opening day of the Super Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground Friday.

"We will be playing against two

great teams, and I am very much looking forward to the challenges that both series will present."

Dravid said he was informed of his appointment by Indian cricket board secretary Karunakaran Nair and the chairman of selectors Kiran More during the tea interval at the SCG.

"As it was during a game it was quite a brief conversation in which they congratulated me on my appointment. The chairman of selectors mentioned that there had been some encouraging signs during the recently concluded Challenger Trophy."

"I look forward to returning to India and meeting up with the coach, selectors and other players to make plans for the matches that are ahead of us."

Dravid's elevation to the top job was widely predicted in the Indian media as Ganguly struggled with injury, poor batting form and a damaging spat with coach Greg Chappell.

Ganguly, whose 21 Test and 76 one-day wins as captain are an Indian record, missed the recent domestic one-day trial matches here due to a tennis elbow injury.

With India also due to play Test series against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, England and the West Indies in a gruelling schedule till July, the selectors clearly did not want to take chances with an uncertain Ganguly at the helm.

Dravid, a prolific top-order batsman and longtime deputy to Ganguly, led India in five Tests and 17 one-dayers in the captain's absence, with mixed results.

Under Dravid, India won and lost two Tests each against Australia and Pakistan last season, while the fifth against New Zealand was drawn.

In 17 one-dayers as captain, Dravid won seven matches and lost nine, while one was rained off.

Smith supports trial by replay



REUTERS, Sydney

World XI captain Graeme Smith said he supported the use of television replays after the video umpire gave out three Australian batsmen on the opening day of the ICC Super Test on Friday.

The ICC agreed to experiment with video technology for the match between Australia and the Rest of the World but the verdict is still unclear.

"Obviously, it's worked because they made the right decisions," South African Smith said.

"Some look out to the naked eye... We thought as a team that (Matthew) Hayden was out off (Steve) Harmison, but was given not out."

"But as long as the obvious and right decisions are being made then it's doing its job."

Opener Hayden survived an lbw appeal that was referred to video before making 111 to help Australia amass 331 for six when bad light ended play.

Others were less lucky and Michael Clarke left the playing arena shaking his head in disbelief after being adjudged to have been caught at bat-pad for 39.

"I think if there wasn't any technology Hayden would have been given out, so the benefit went to the batter there, not

playing a shot, maybe 50-50, most times umpires would have given you out there I would have thought," Smith said.

"So I think it's going to work out eventually either way, I don't think it's going to be heavily balanced in batters' or bowlers' way."

Hayden was yet to make up his mind about the technology.

"It'll be interesting to see as the test match pans out and more decisions are made by it," he said.

"Let's not speak too early or judge it too early, let's have a look at it through the test match and see where we're at."

Video replays are already in regular use for run outs, stumpings and catches caught low to the ground but the new rules will cover all catches and lbw's, traditionally the most controversial mode of dismissal.

The three Australians given out by the video umpire on Friday, Clarke, Simon Katich and Shane Watson, were all dismissed in different ways.

Katich was run out for a duck and Watson was trapped leg before wicket to Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan for 24.

"I considered Shane Watson very unlucky. With the naked eye, it seemed a real line ball decision," Hayden said.

"But the time frame it takes is perhaps the issue. I think the public want to see the game moving forward as quickly as they possibly can."

More controversial was the dismissal

of Clarke, who was given out caught by Indian Virender Sehwag off New Zealand spinner Daniel Vettori, despite some doubt as to whether the ball had clipped the inside of his bat.

South African umpire Rudi Koertzen referred the matter to video umpire Darrell Hair but decided to give him out anyway when Hair reported back that the television replays were inconclusive.

Tigers captain

FROM PAGE 12 naming the super-sub after the toss."

Only the West Indies captain was not present at the meeting.

"Before the meeting we had a dinner on Tuesday and it was a fantastic experience for me because the win over Australia came up over and over again," said Bashar.

Spain get

FROM PAGE 12 Norway, runners-up to Italy in their group, take on the Czech Republic who clinched a play-off place behind Holland by winning their last match 3-0 in Finland.

Switzerland beat Turkey 2-1 in Istanbul and lost 2-1 in Bern when they last met in Euro 96 qualifiers.

The Czech Republic beat Norway 2-0 in Prague and drew 1-1 in Oslo when they last met, also in qualifying for Euro 96.

Hayden, Gilchrist show

FROM PAGE 12

The broad-shouldered Queenslander began cautiously, scoring just 28 in the morning session, before accelerating after lunch.

"I'm not trying to hoodwink myself, I'm a naturally aggressive player and if the bowling's off then that's what I'm trying to do," he told a news conference. "But if the bowling's on I guess there's no point in taking the option of going hard."

Hayden twice got the benefit of the doubt to loud lbw appeals, including one which was referred to the video umpire, before reaching his hundred after tea off 161 balls when he drove Harmison to the boundary. He was dismissed after tea for 111, caught by Jacques Kallis off Muralitharan.

Gilchrist, player of the series in last week's three one-dayers in Melbourne, was in a far more aggressive mood.

He smashed eight boundaries and

four sixes off only 109 balls to reach the close just six runs away from his hundred with Shane Warne on one.

Ponting had also looked to be in great touch as he got within sight of a half-century before an uncharacteristic error brought him undone just before lunch.

Harmison, overlooked for the one-day series, sent Langer tumbling to the pitch with his second delivery and then knocked his off-stump out of the ground with the next ball.

Ponting