

## SOS to Warne!

AFP, Sydney

England coach Duncan Fletcher said Saturday he would like Shane Warne to cross the great cricket divide and work as a spin doctor for Australia's old Ashes enemy.

The champion leg-spinner played his 145th and final Test in Australia's 10-wicket victory over England in the fifth Sydney Test Friday to claim an 86-year-old 5-0 Ashes clean sweep.

Fletcher, who faces fall-out over England's performance in the series, is keen for Test cricket's leading wicket-taker to impart his skill, knowledge and experience to England spin bowlers.

"I'd be happy with him to speak to anyone, there's no doubt about it," Fletcher told reporters here Saturday.

"Someone of that calibre would be very useful for England to use his experience, at any stage during the (northern) summer or at any stage of a player's career.

"Not only of a young spinner. Imagine the help he could give to a very experienced spinner in the side."

Although finished with Test cricket, Warne is committed to playing out the remaining two years of his contract with English county Hampshire, providing England potential access to his wealth of cricket knowledge.

Fletcher said it would not only be spinners who would benefit from Warne's insight.

"Not only a spinner. He's got the capabilities of helping anyone in international cricket on how to play the game," he said.

In a sign England had already begun tapping into Warne's thinking, he and opposing spinner Monty Panesar were seen chatting at length after the fifth Ashes Test at the SCG.

Of Warne's 708 Test wickets, 195 were against England.

Australian Troy Cooley, who was instrumental as bowling coach under Fletcher in England's 2005 Ashes victory, was coaxed back home to help Ricky Ponting's team regain the urn.

Cooley was said to be influential in turning around the bowling fortunes of speedster Brett Lee in the Ashes series.

## 'Eng refused practice'

CRICINFO, undated

England refused the chance to play 16 days of warm-up matches before their ill-fated Ashes defence, according to Bob Merriman, the former Cricket Australia chairman.

Merriman, who remains a director of Cricket Australia, said England had been offered the opportunity to play four four-day games before the first Test.

Instead, they played three matches -- none of whom had first-class status -- totalling only seven days and suggestions they were under-prepared plagued the tourists all series.

Merriman was quoted in The Times as saying the England players opted for a shorter build-up after completing the Champions Trophy in India, even though Australia were prepared to push back the start date of the first Test to accommodate the extra fixtures.

"We thought they would come straight from India rather than go home," Merriman said.

Apparently, though, their players didn't want to. We offered them four four-day matches before the first Test, beginning in Sydney, then Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane."

John Carr, the ECB's director of operations, said Merriman's claims were incorrect. "The truth is that Cricket Australia actually made us pay for our first day in Australia (which is against the usual protocol) on the basis that we were having a longer lead-in period to the first Test than they received on the 2005 tour of England," Carr told the paper.

"Their proposed arrival date for us was actually a day later than we got there so we could not physically have fitted in four four-day matches in the period that they were prepared to host us, which was for 18 days before the first Test."

## Scolari itching

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The February 6 match will be the second between Portugal and Brazil since Scolari took the helm of the Portuguese national team in December 2002.

Portugal beat five-times world champions Brazil 2-1 when the two sides last met in a friendly in March 2003 in the northern Portuguese city of Oporto.

## Henry speaks

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"My brain was like that. When people asked if I was okay I would say 'Yes' even though I knew I wasn't."

"You have to read the right signals in your body. One thing I have found difficult to do is to listen to my body. I need to do that."

"I hope all my problems are over but when you average over 60 games a season you pay the price."



PHOTO: INTERNET  
THERE HE IS: Retired Australian cricketer Damien Martyn (L) joins the party of Justin Langer, Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne (R) after the final Ashes Test victory against England at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

## Hayden ogles at WC

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Matthew Hayden has bid farewell to his Test opening partner Justin Langer and now wants to partner Adam Gilchrist in the Australian team all the way to this year's one-day World Cup final.

Hayden and Justin Langer opened for the last time in Australia's 10-wicket final Ashes Test win over England on Friday in Sydney.

He said he wanted to reignite his opening stand with Gilchrist, starting with this month's one-day triangular series against England and New Zealand.

Hayden's limited overs career appeared over when he lost his spot after the 2005 tour of England, but he is now intent on staying put throughout 2007.

The pair is the third-most prolific

bowling was terrific.

"Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath will dominate the headlines -- and rightly so -- but Stuart Clark's also been unbelievable. Our batting, when we had a partnership going, was relentless. All the disciplines of Test cricket, really.

"We just didn't give England a chance."

Ponting paid tribute to bowlers McGrath and Warne, who have retired from Test cricket following the Ashes series.

He praised quick McGrath as better than Curly Ambrose and Shaun Pollock, while he said spinner Warne's special talent lay in anticipating what stroke the batsman would attempt.

"As for England's performances, people will look at the scoreboard and think that they crumbled," Ponting wrote.

"It's hard for me to judge. I don't know their players and wouldn't like to comment on their character or lack of it. All I know is that at different times in this series we had to play exceptional cricket.

"I've been lucky enough to have

opening stand in the shortened game, having put on over 3,800 runs in 80 matches together.

"Our partnership has got an opportunity to blossom over the next few months," Hayden said.

"Adam is a big player in tournaments and our partnership was very strong right through the last World Cup."

"It's great to get that opportunity again and deep down we've got a lot of hunger to play for Australia and play well, and if that takes us to the World Cup -- hopefully it will do -- it will be a tremendous honour and achievement."

Hayden lost his spot to Simon Katich after the 2005 tour of England, who in turn lost it to Watson in India.

Hayden and Gilchrist averaged stands of 52 throughout the 2003 World Cup, and put on 105 in the win over India in the final.

The pair is the third-most prolific

played in lots of winning teams, but this one has been special.

"To be able to walk up to your bowlers, tell them what you want, set a few field positions and then see it all come off; from a captain's point of view, it doesn't get any better. The execution was perfect."

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## 'England had no chance'

Cricket

AFP, London

Victorious Australia captain Ricky Ponting said Saturday that England had no chance of retaining the Ashes thanks to his side's iron discipline.

Ponting said it felt "incredible" to seal a 5-0 series victory, the first Ashes whitewash in 86 years, adding that it was deserved due to Australia's meticulous preparation.

"If I had been allowed to write my own script for this series, I couldn't have come up with anything better than this," Ponting wrote in The Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"It's been mistake-free, high-pressure stuff and we've worked hard for it. It's like we turned up and expected our talent to win games. We prepared as well as we possibly could, worked hard and got our just rewards.

"I would say that our discipline was the key. We've done all the little things really well. Our running between the wickets was great, our fielding, generally, was sharp. Our

bowling was terrific.

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## Clijsters conquers

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punishing ground strokes were too much for Sharapova, who was still showing some of the sluggishness that made her first round win over China's Yan Zi look fortunate.

Sharapova was first to break at 2-2 in the second set but Clijsters won every game of the set from then on.

Hardly a serve was held in the second set and Sharapova frittered away a handful of set points with some poorly judged backhands.

She managed to take Clijsters to a tie-break, but even with the Belgian serving two double faults at 6-7, Sharapova was unable to capitalise, succumbing eventually to 10-8.

"It was nice because I felt very comfortable out there," Clijsters said afterwards. "You just have to get the rhythm in the beginning and I felt like I was returning well."

She said she had shrugged off the injuries that had forced her to miss much of the past couple of seasons and was feeling strong going into the Australian Open in Melbourne.

"My strength is something I don't have to worry about -- so I can concentrate on those other things that need work," she said.

An upbeat Sharapova said she was upset by her defeat but was satisfied she had played well and hailed the three matches she played here as ideal preparation for Australia.

"I think I played well, you can't always guarantee a win," she said.

"Quite a bit will depend on (Buchanan's) thoughts," Taylor said in the Sydney Morning Herald.

"Depending on who we go for, it might be possible for them to travel to the World Cup with John, if they are not already coaching an international team. If that is possible, that would be our preference."

"We have had some informal chats already as a committee. I'm not at liberty to say much more than that, but certainly the one-day series will give us an opportunity to get together in the next couple of weeks to discuss matters further."

Tom Moody, the Sri Lanka coach, and Tim Nielsen, who is in charge of Australia's Centre of Excellence, are the front-runners for the country's next coach. The World Cup in the West Indies is Buchanan's final task in his current role, but Taylor, who is on a committee to choose the replacement, has added to his duties.

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