

## Pietersen fractures rib

AFP, Melbourne

England's Kevin Pietersen will return home to focus on getting fit for the World Cup after a cracked right rib brought a premature end to his Australian tour.

The 26-year-old suffered the injury when struck on the ribcage by a Glenn McGrath delivery as he top-scored with 82 in England's defeat in the opening match of the triangular series at the MCG here Friday.

He was adopting the tactic of advancing at McGrath, a ploy he also used during the Test series, when he was hit.

Although he continued to bat after the blow, he didn't look comfortable and was dismissed a short time later.

Pietersen is returning to England and his recovery time is expected to be at least 3-5 weeks.

With the World Cup just eight weeks away, it is an untimely injury for Pietersen, but he expects to be fit for the Caribbean tournament.

"I'll be getting myself as fit as I can," he said after Friday's game.

"I've never played in the World Cup before so I'll be in the Caribbean if selected."

"I'll just have to bide my time but I'm a pretty quick healer, so I'll get myself as fit as I can as quick as I can and I'll be champing at the bit to get to the Caribbean."

Pietersen, who averages more than 50 with the bat in one-day internationals in the struggling English limited-overs side, said he knew he was in trouble as soon as the delivery struck him.

"I've never been hit so hard," he said. "I've been hit a few times and I've gone 'Oh yeah, that will be all right with a bit of ice,' but when this one hit me I couldn't breathe for a few minutes and I knew it was a little bit more serious than the other ones. It did restrict my breathing and my strokeplay."

Pietersen was dismayed at having to leave his teammates without having enjoyed a win since arriving in Australia in early November.

"Distraught. Absolutely distraught," he said. "It's not how I planned it out. I planned it out to give it a real good go and to draw a line after what happened after the Ashes."

## SL recall

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four uncapped players.

## PRELIMINARY SQUAD

Mahela Jayawardena, Marvan Atapattu, Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Avishka Gunawardena, Mahela Udawatta, Kumar Sangakkara, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedera, Malinda Warnapura, Russel Arnold, Prasanna Jayawardena, Chamara Silva, Farveez Maharoof, Chaminda Vaas, Ruchira Perera, Dilhara Fernando, Ishara Amarasinghe, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekara, Nuwan Zoysa, Akalanka Ganegama, Dilhara Lokuhettige, Muttiah Muralidaran, Rangana Herath, Malinga Bandara, Kaushal Lokurachchi, Gayan Wijekoon, Upul Chandana and Dhammika Prasad.

## Ferguson

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to the United States was accelerated by the fact he has not featured as much as he would have hoped for Real Madrid this season.

"You have got to gauge his position at Real Madrid at the moment," said the Scot. "It's probably accelerated it because he's only played five games this season. He can't be happy with that."

"Every top player wants to play. So that has probably accelerated the whole business of it."

"He was a terrific player for Manchester United and everyone at the club hopes he does well in America."

Manchester United defender Gary Neville, Beckham's closest friend in football, predicted that his pal would be determined to go out of Madrid on a high.

"I wish him all the best in everything he does," said Neville, who grew up alongside Beckham at Old Trafford and went on to partner him on England's right flank.

"He is a great friend and this is another challenge for him. He has another six months left at Real Madrid and I am sure he will want to play and win something with them."

"After that he will head for America and having spoken to him I know he is looking forward to it. You need challenges in your life and he has a new one."

"David has always wanted to do things differently and in his own way. He has done it again."

## From football

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Major League Soccer grounded in salary caps and lower-priced talent since its 1996 debut, allowing the league to grow and build solid support but with fan interest levels far below that of other US sports.

But MLS officials made a rule change after last season allowing clubs to bypass the salary cap for one player, opening the door to a big-money Beckham signing and possibly the floodgates for other global talent, especially big names in their waning years.



England batsman Kevin Pietersen (C) cries out in pain after fracturing his ribs as team physiotherapist Dean Conway (2nd R) attends during the opening one-day international of the Commonwealth Bank tri-series at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday.

## Kim clinches Sydney title

AFP, Sydney

Kim Clijsters fought back from match point down to end Jelena Jankovic's unbeaten start to the year in the Sydney International final here on Friday.

The Belgian world No.5 looked down the barrel as the intense Serb youngster twice served for the match only to be broken and taken into a second set tiebreaker.

Clijsters, 23, playing in her farewell season, claimed her second Sydney title, following her 2003 success, to beat the 12th-ranked Jankovic 4-6, 7-6, 6-4 in almost two and a half hours and boost her confidence for next week's Australian Open in Melbourne.

## Anna wins all-Russian final

AFP, Hobart

Top seed Anna Chakvetadze tuned up for next week's Australian Open by winning her third WTA tour title in an all-Russian final at the Hobart International here Friday.

World No.13 Chakvetadze downed teenaged qualifier Vasilisa Bardina 6-3, 7-6.

The 19-year-old Russian added the Hobart title to her 2006 titles from Guangzhou and her hometown of Moscow.

## Tough draw for top

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Grand Slam ranked 26.

Spanish second seed Rafael Nadal has Australian Lleyton Hewitt, American world No.5 James Blake and rising British star Andy Murray in his quarter.

Nadal, who withdrew from the lead-up Sydney tournament with a right thigh injury, starts off with a match against American Robert Kendrick, while Blake has a tough opener against former Australian Open finalist Carlos Moya.

Both Blake and Moya are in opposing semi-finals at the Sydney International later Friday.

Australia's main hope, 19th-ranked Hewitt, who lost to Safin in the 2005 Australian Open final, has a qualifier first up.

Women's top seed Maria Sharapova and Belgian Kim Clijsters have been drawn in the same half along with three-time Australian Open champion Martina Hingis.

Sharapova opens against France's Camille Pin, and is drawn to meet Swiss eighth seed Patty Schnyder in the quarters.

Clijsters, who reached the 2004 Australian Open final and is seeded four this year, opens against Hobart International finalist, Vasilisa Bardina of Russia and could face sixth-seed Hingis in the quarters.

Hingis, who lost in the first round to eventual finalist Jelena Jankovic at the Sydney International, plays

France's Nathalie Dechy in her opening match.

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Italian 27th seed Mara Santangelo has drawn the dangerous unseeded "floater" and two-time Australian Open winner Serena Williams in the first round.

Williams, whose 2006 season was blighted by injury, goes into the tournament with a 94th ranking and is in the third quarter of the women's draw occupied by third-seeded Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova, fifth-seeded Russian Nadia Petrova and Serbia's Jankovic.

Second seed and defending champion Amelie Mauresmo is drawn in the bottom quarter of the draw with Russian seventh seed Elena Dementieva and 10th seeded Czech Nicole Vaidisova.

Mauresmo, who won her first Grand Slam in last year's Australian final, plays American Shenay Perry in the first round.

## Chelsea ignore

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tion at not being able to sign new players after the 1-1 Carling Cup semi-final draw with Wycombe on Wednesday.

He said: "I have asked for players and it's not my choice that no one is coming. It's not my club, I am just a manager."

"I expect my squad to be the same at the end of the transfer window as it was at the start."

## Akram asks for passion

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former cricket great Wasim Akram said Friday that if Pakistan play with passion and aggression they can outdo rivals India and beat South Africa on their tough tour.

"I was surprised to see India low on passion and aggression after winning the first Test," Akram told AFP in an exclusive interview.

Pakistan skipper Inzamamul Haq should have pushed for Akhtar's inclusion, Akram said.

"Inzamam had led the team well but I think he should know where his priorities lie and he should have fought for Akhtar because Akhtar is a proven match winner," Akram said.

He also praised Indian paceman Shanthakumaran Sreesanth.

"Sreesanth showed how much aggression you need to be successful in South Africa and proved a successful bowler for India and in the same way Akhtar can be successful."

Akram lashed out at Pakistan selectors for not naming allrounder Azhar Mahmood in the initial 30-man squad for the World Cup, which begins in the West Indies in March.

"I was surprised to see Sachin Tendulkar so low on passion and he was negative in his batting. In fact India looked afraid in the last Test and Pakistan should avoid such an

Cricket

## Moody most wanted

INTERNET, undated

Tom Moody has emerged as favourite to succeed John Buchanan as national cricket coach, with Australia appearing to have gained a jump on England for the former international all-rounder's services.

A Cricket Australia panel headed by Mark Taylor, set up to find a coach to replace Buchanan when he steps down after the World Cup, is believed to have narrowed the search down to a short-list of two — Moody and Buchanan's former assistant Tim Nielsen.

Nielsen, now head coach at CA's Centre of Excellence in Brisbane, is popular with most Australian players after serving under Buchanan. But after preliminary interviews, it is believed Moody has become the

leading candidate owing to the fact he has greater top-level coaching experience than Nielsen, a former wicketkeeper-batsman for South Australia.

Moody, who is also well liked by current Australian squad members who played with him at the tail end of his career, is already an international coach, having been appointed to the Sri Lanka job two years ago after narrowly missing out to Greg Chappell in the battle to coach India.

Before that, Moody had several years as coach of Worcestershire in English county cricket.

Moody has also been linked to the England coaching job, with Duncan Fletcher not expected to retain the post after the World Cup.

Moody is known to have a fondness for England, after the West Australian's years there as a county player and coach, and due to the fact his wife is English. On top of that, England would likely be able to

offer more money for its national coach than Australia.

However, Australia may have stolen a march on their potential rivals for Moody's signature. England are yet to confirm they are after a new coach, and are not believed to have begun the interview process for candidates. Moody would also face stiff competition if he pursued the England job from Peter Moores, who beat him to the post of England's Academy Director when Rod Marsh stood down.

Meanwhile, NSW has hailed the Andrew Johns Twenty20 experiment a success, with a combined attendance of nearly 30,000 watching his two games for the Blues in Newcastle and Telstra Stadium.

Despite rumours Johns was paid some \$40,000 for his two matches, the real payment is believed to be around half that figure.

## Posh Becks goes

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However in 2002, when the cult British film "Bend It Like Beckham" was due to be released in US theatres, studio bosses in America considered changing the film's name because they were worried no one knew who the footballer was.

Since then Beckham's profile in America has risen steadily, on the back of marketing campaigns and appearances on the red carpet at US awards shows.

News media described Los Angeles as a natural habitat for the Beckham circus. "I think they'll be welcomed with open arms," Gary Morgan of Los Angeles-based Splash News and photo agency told AFP.

"They're friends with Tom and Katie, so they've got an immediate in" into the Hollywood super-life. They have a very showbiz-oriented life already. It's a natural fit."

Los Angeles was once known as a

haven for the rich and famous, a place where celebrities could live in relative anonymity.

But Beckham and his wife could be in for a shock if they were expecting a respite from the relentless attentions of the paparazzi, Morgan warned.

"I think he'll get less privacy in the US because he'll have less ability to deal with it," he said. "There are far less stringent laws over here about privacy than there are in Europe."

"In fact he'll probably be more of an open target here than he was in Spain or England."

And even though Beckham's glory days as a footballer are behind him, photos of the former England star are still some of the most valuable around for paparazzi.

"There are a couple of photo agencies in Spain that are going to find their income diving by about 90 percent as soon as he leaves," Morgan said.

Los Angeles was once known as a

Robert Thompson, a professor of pop culture at the University of Syracuse, questioned whether Beckham's celebrity was great enough to make US soccer a mainstream sport.

"Before Beckham can convince America to fall in love with soccer, he's going to have to convince America to fall in love with David Beckham," Thompson told AFP. "And I'm not sure his degree of celebrity is as great here as it is in other parts of the world."

"If you were to go out and survey 100 people in the United States, they would be able to tell you that Britney Spears has recently gone out to nightclubs without wearing under-wear — but I'm not sure they'd be able to tell you which soccer team David Beckham plays for."

"People know the image of Beckham. But he's not in the big league of celebrities here."

## Aussies pile on agony

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and a six from the 61 balls he faced.

Hayden and Gilchrist put on 101 and brought up the Australian century in the 15th over, a milestone that the English took 24 overs to reach.

Although the introduction of spinners Monty Panesar and Jamie Dalrymple claimed the two openers and temporarily slowed the onslaught, England were never really back in the contest.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting (82 not out), who took a freight catch late in the England innings, and Michael Clarke (57 not out), then put on 133 for the third wicket to easily reach the victory target.

Chelsea have been told they will have to do without inspirational captain John Terry for the Wigan clash and, potentially, several more weeks following recent back surgery.

Terry's absence has been painfully apparent as Chelsea have drawn their last three Premiership matches -- against Reading, Fulham and Aston Villa -- as well as Wednesday's League Cup semi-final first leg at Wycombe.

Terry's central defensive partner Ricardo Carvalho will return to action on Saturday along with striker Didier Drogba, the pair having missed the Wycombe match due to suspension.

The Gunners also knocked six past Blackburn when they visited the Emirates Stadium just before Christmas, although Mark Hughes's side have since gone on a run that has lifted them clear of the relegation zone.

Pietersen will be out of action for

3-5 weeks and will return