

Sanath mum on retirement

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's veteran opening batsman Sanath Jayasuriya was non-committal Thursday about playing in the cricket World Cup's next edition in 2011, saying it was too early to mull the prospect.

Upon his return to the island Thursday after Sri Lanka's World Cup campaign in the Caribbean, the left-handed opener said it was not the time now to think about playing in 2011.

Jayasuriya said he needed to contemplate his future while enjoying a break over the next few weeks before Sri Lanka's next engagement of a one-day international series in Abu Dhabi.

There had been speculation that 2007 would be Jayasuriya's last World Cup outing, but he remained tight-lipped.

Looking back at the tournament in which Sri Lanka emerged runners-up to Ricky Ponting's Australians, the former Sri Lankan captain said: "I could have done better."

Jayasuriya playing in his fifth World Cup and averaged 46.50 runs, including two centuries and two half-centuries.

His centuries, against Bangladesh and the West Indies, showed glimpses of the destructive form which saw him being nominated for player of the series in the 1996 World Cup.

Jayasuriya, 38, had maintained a remarkable level of fitness to be in the reckoning for selections.

Having retired in 2005, he was recalled to join the Sri Lankans in Australia during the early part of 2006.

Pigeon has

FROM PAGE 21

And he ended his career with 563 Test wickets, a record for a fast bowler, 381 one-day scalps and a triple World Cup winner.

Australia Prime Minister John Howard welcomed the team back from the Caribbean at a breakfast reception.

He said: "The wonderful Glenn McGrath ... really has been an ornament to Australian cricket for many years."

"He is the greatest fast bowler of his generation and many would say he ranks with the very greatest that the game has seen."

"You'd have to rank him with (Dennis) Lillee and (Ray) Lindwall as the three great fast bowlers this country's produced. He's been terrific."

Tigers focus on

FROM PAGE 21

spin, Bangladesh drafted in Kapali to practise leg-break bowling for the nets. It seemed that the four cricketers who joined the one-day team, were actually called to tune up for the Test series.

"Our three spinners have been doing remarkable well but still, we can't demand turning wickets because of India's variety in this department. Normal and sporting wicket would serve us better," opined the Tigers leader.

"Our spin trio has proved that they can be effective on any kind of surface."

Bashar was still worried about the opening pair and mentioned that they need to settle the everlasting problem for more success.

"We have problems and need Shahriar Nafees to recover his form very soon. He has just gone through a bad patch that can happen to any player."

His new deputy Mohammad Ashraful told that his role as a batsman has not changed after being named vice-captain.

"Vice-captains have nothing to do when the captain is there. My job is to steady our batting. This series is very important because we have to prove that our win over India was not a fluke. They will also be eager to seek revenge," said Ashraful.

"Still, I feel if we do well, we can not only win a match but the series too."

We were perfect

FROM PAGE 24

the winter break allowed us to prepare for the second half of the season."

Gilardino was used as a substitute today, but scored the final goal in the 5-3 aggregate victory.

"Gilardino will certainly break through. This is his second year at Milan and he had no previous experience at this level, so he will slowly gain the confidence and good fortune that he did not have in the other games so far."

Milan blow

FROM PAGE 24

Inzaghi almost made it 3-0 just before the break as Milan maintained their grip on a surprisingly one-sided contest with United's biggest threat, Cristiano Ronaldo, completely shackled.

A last-ditch goaline clearance from Wes Brown denied Kaka in the 53rd minute before United squandered an excellent opening.

Gilardino came on for the tiring Inzaghi and he made his mark 12 minutes from time, driving through the United defence before side-footing past van der Sar.



Australia captain Ricky Ponting (L) is all smiles as he poses with his wife Rianna and the World Cup trophy during the team's breakfast at the SCG on Thursday.

Flat payment for Indians

FROM PAGE 21

included in the contracts clauses to be signed by the players before they leave for Bangladesh on May 7, Shah said.

Shah termed as "hypothetical" a question what decision would the cricket board take if the players refuse to sign on the dotted line.

"I can't answer hypothetical questions. Let us wait and see. I have just come today from abroad. I am going to Kolkata on Saturday, the last day of the conditioning camp for the team," he said.

Shah maintained that the players would not be the losers due to the reduced retainer fees and match fees as they are entitled for bonus payments if they end up victorious.

Earlier, the contracted players received Rs 1.5 and Rs 2.5 lakh per ODI and Test while the non-contracted cricketers got Rs 2 and Rs 3.5 lakh respectively.

The players (international and domestic equally) were also receiving 26 per cent of the gross revenue of the board, including for TV rights, till

it was decided at the last AGM of the BCCI that the amount due to the players would exclude revenue from the lucrative TV rights.

Meanwhile, India's batting star Sachin Tendulkar, who sprained his ankle yesterday, rejoined the Bangladesh-bound team's practice session in Kolkata yesterday for a few knockings on the second day of the conditioning camp.

"Sachin continues to get ice treatment. Physio John Gloster says he is improving," Indian team's administrative manager Surendra Bhavasis said.

Tendulkar, who skipped the morning practice session, took the willow for about 15 minutes at the indoor gymnasium adjacent to Eden Gardens in the afternoon.

Tendulkar was present throughout in the outdoor session though he did not take part in the activities. However, an indicator of his improved condition was that he did not seem to be in discomfort while walking.

Bhave said as much. "You saw he was walking freely. He doesn't have much of a swelling. The pain is also not there."

Middle order batsman VVS Laxman was down with gastroenteritis and could not join the camp. The batsman from Hyderabad needs time to recover before joining the camp, Bhave added.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 21

off after 81.5 overs due to rain.

AFC FESTIVAL

The AFC football Festival (Under-13) kicks off today at the BKSP with 12 teams participating in the regular event of the Asian Football Federation calendar.

The participating nations of the two-day event are Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Bangladesh.

Mourinho defends Robben

AFP, London

Jose Mourinho has insisted that Arjen Robben should be praised not damned by Chelsea fans after the Dutch winger stepped up to take the opening spot-kick in Wednesday night's shootout defeat by Liverpool.

Robben, who returned to the Chelsea line-up for the first time since he had knee surgery as a late sub, had his effort brilliantly saved by Jose Reina and Liverpool went on to win the shoot-out 4-1.

But Mourinho, whose difficult relationship with Robben has included public suggestions that he pulls out of squads too easily with injuries, insisted there would be no recriminations.

"Robben was a brave boy," the Chelsea boss declared. "He wanted very much to come and help

because he knows the team is in a difficult moment with so many injuries."

"He was not absolutely ready but he was saying 'I want to help'. I played him to try, with his speed and sharpness, to bring something to the game in extra-time. We tried to score the winning goal and after that it went to penalties."

"He is a good penalty taker. He was confident to take it and again he was brave to have the responsibility and go. He missed -- that's life."

"We didn't want it to go to penalties. On penalties, a team wins or loses, why? Luck? A bad penalty taker? A goalkeeper more adapted to saving penalties? In the end, they scored more penalties than us."

With Manchester United firmly in the driving seat in the Premiership, Chelsea's dreams of quad success have been shattered and Mourinho must now rally his troops for the FA Cup final against United at the new Wembley on

May 19.

But Mourinho insisted he was proud of a squad he claims has defied the odds to have done as well as they have this season, during which Petr Cech, John Terry, Ricardo Carvalho, Michael Ballack and Robben have all spent significant periods on the sidelines.

"I did not say many words to the players afterwards," Mourino added. "I am proud of them and share the difficult moment with them. From minute 30 in the first half Chelsea were trying to win and to score over the 90 minutes. In extra-time again Chelsea was stronger, faster and incredibly fresher."

Mourinho also suggested that Liverpool's goal on Tuesday night might have been ruled off by a more attentive official.

"Daniel Agger lost his marker for the goal but somebody tells me that Salomon Kalou was blocked by an opponent," Mourinho said. "I am proud of them all."

Hero's welcome for Champs

FROM PAGE 21

darkness for three overs after the players had believed the game to be over.

"It sounded a whole lot better to us to get those three overs out of the way that night than come back the next morning -- I'd have been struggling to find someone to bowl the three overs the next morning," Ponting said.

But, asked about the role of the officials, he made it clear that the confusion had not gone down well at the time.

"I think they've learned their lessons there and I'm sure next time they officiate in big games like that they'll know the rules inside out."

Ponting joked about the days of celebration by the team in the Caribbean since the final.

"The celebrations were long and hard which is what they should

be after you win a World Cup.

"There were some pretty amazing scenes coming back to Australia from guys (with) not a lot of clothing on at different hours of the morning, but we celebrated as we should."

Ponting said Australia's second straight undefeated run at a World Cup was an amazing achievement and praised Adam Gilchrist for his man of the match performance in the final.

"For us to again go through undefeated and once again have a lot of our players peaking at the right time in the World Cup is an amazing achievement by everybody," he said.

"Gilly's innings in the final as I have been flat out telling him, it was unbelievable, that was the one difference between the two teams in the final."

Nadal wins

FROM PAGE 24

though the French Open is still missing from his cabinet -- from levelling the contest to force the decider as both men came to terms with the unusual conditions.

Nadal held on clay but Federer held on the grass and the pair traded breaks as they shared the opening six games before the Swiss forced the tiebreak by holding in the 12th game with the pressure on.

Starting out playing the first half dozen points of the shootout on the green stuff that generally does not suit his game Nadal looked to have given up the ghost as he trailed 4-2 but rallied strongly after changing ends to get his feet dancing on his favoured red dirt.

He could have wrapped things up but threw in an inopportune double fault before finally edging home 12-10 after two-and-a-half hours to clinch bragging rights to the delight of his home crowd.

Shoaib wants fitness issue sorted

PTI, Karachi

Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar has said he wanted to get his fitness problems sorted out once and for all during the lean cricketing season to come back tougher for the home series against South Africa in September.

Shoaib, who has not been named even in the probabilities for the Abu Dhabi series against Sri Lanka, said he would make full use of the gap.

"I'm fit. I never said I was unfit. I had a knee injury before the World Cup but I just need a little bit more time to get fitter and get myself sorted out properly once and for all," he was quoted as saying by "The News".

Shoaib, who has played only few One-dayers before the dope controversy during the Champions Trophy last year, said his prolonged absence would give opportunity to trial fast bowlers from the domestic scene.

Abdul Rauf and Mohammad Irshad may get a chance in the series and there might even be a return for Mohammad Khalil.

"This is the right time to invest some time in myself and let the youngsters go out there and show something that they can do. It'll be nice to see some youngsters come through, do well for the country. It's a healthy sign," he said.

Shoaib said he was not keen to become the captain but just wanted to focus on serving the team and support skipper.

Sheva gets libel damages

AFP, London

Chelsea star Andriy Shevchenko accepted libel damages from a British newspaper Thursday after it claimed that he was a "dressing room spy" for the club's tycoon owner Roman Abramovich.

The Ukraine striker took legal action against the Daily Mirror, which also alleged that fellow players blamed him for a row between Abramovich and the club's manager Jose Mourinho.

The tabloid also claimed that Shevchenko had wanted Abramovich to replace Mourinho with Carlo Ancelotti, the coach of his former club AC Milan.

Despite complaints from Shevchenko's lawyers, the paper then went on to print allegations that he had complained about Mourinho and would have been happy to leave Chelsea on loan last year, London's High Court heard.

His lawyer, John Kelly, told the court that Shevchenko did not make any of the statements attributed to him in reports this year.

The claims had damaged his reputation, upset him and his family and created embarrassment at his club, Kelly added.

The newspaper's owners, MGN Limited, accepted that the allegations were untrue, apologised and will pay undisclosed damages, as well as the player's costs.

Shevchenko, the 2004 European footballer of the year, joined Chelsea from Italian giants AC Milan in 2006 for 30 million pounds (44 million euros, 60 million dollars), a British record.

Mahela accepts

FROM PAGE 21

"We had given different players different roles and everyone played their part very well," Jayawardene said, summing up Sri Lanka's run to the final.

He dismissed the notion that losing the toss to Ponting in the final was a major setback. "We did not care about the toss. Throughout the tournament our focus was on winning the game irrespective of what happened at the toss."

Jayawardene said umpires Steve Bucknor and Aleem Dar had erred when they told Ricky Ponting that the game would be carried over to Sunday's reserve day after it was halted due to bad light.

"We knew we had lost the World Cup the moment our batsmen accepted bad light because we had completed 20 overs by then," he said.

Time for revenge

FROM PAGE 24

inability to keep hold of the ball, but insisted they would bounce back in Saturday's crunch Manchester derby against City.

"They caught us on the back foot at the start, but I still felt we could have done better," he said.

"The name of the game in Europe is that you don't give the ball away, and Milan kept possession better than us."

But the nature of our football club is that you have to recover from disappointments, and we will have to do that on Saturday.

United could win the Premiership title this weekend if they defeat Manchester City and second-placed Chelsea fail to beat Arsenal.

Windies drop Samuels

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Marlon Samuels has been dropped from the 15-man squad for the four-Test series in England which starts next week. There are few surprises in the choices, although there is no back-up wicketkeeper or specialist spinner in the side. Ravi Rampaul returns while there is an overdue call-up for allrounder Darren Sammy.

Gordon Greenidge, the former opener and current convener of selectors, put his faith in the side when he explained the selection. "The task has not been easy, especially given the fact that the performance for the recently-completed World Cup wasn't as great as we had all hoped," he said during the announcement on local television. "We feel that this squad should perform credibly. We feel we have a good mix, and we're hoping that this mix will start the ball rolling as far as the redevelopment or the re-defining of West Indies cricket for the future."

Greenidge also said he would address the squad prior to their

departure regarding reports of indiscipline during the World Cup.

Former West Indies selector Joey Carew expressed some surprise at the squad. "I can't criticise the selections. The fact that [Marlon] Samuels and [Pedro] Collins are not there is noticeable," he told T&T Express. "I thought they would have chosen a spinner, Dave Mohammed, but they may think he is not up to Test standard."

Ramnaresh Sarwan, the newly appointed West Indies captain, insisted that the team needed support. "I think it is important that the team gets the support which it needs to take West Indies cricket forward," he said, while indicating that the team would struggle in the absence of Brian Lara.

"I think it is an opportunity, obviously Brian was a tremendous player for us and a tremendous player for the world. I think that it is an opportunity for the younger players to actually show their skills and what they are made of. I am sure that they will be looking forward to it. It is very important for us to play as a team, as I have said before, and it cannot be a one-man show. I am sure that we will be able to pull together as a team and that

the other players will be able to mature on the tour."

In regards to criticism of his game, Sarwan said the captaincy was an opportunity to step up. "Obviously, I have got out in different fashions - playing rash strokes - and maybe this is a blessing in disguise to give me more responsibility and this is something which I think that I need. So it is something which I am looking forward too and I am going to try and make the best of it."

The side leaves the Caribbean on May 8 and plays one three-day warm-up match against Somerset before the Lord's Test on May 17. The squad for the three ODIs and two Twenty20 matches which follow the Tests will be named later.

SQUAD

Ramnaresh Sarwan (capt), Dwayne Bravo, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Corey Collmore, Fidel Edwards, Daren Ganga, Chris Gayle, Sylvester Joseph, Runako Morton, Daren Powell, Denesh Ramdin (wk), Darren Sammy, Devon Smith, Jerome Taylor, Ravi Rampaul.

Burglar has the last laugh

Football

AFP, Liverpool

As Jose Reina was performing heroics in a penalty shoot-out to send Liverpool into the Champions League final, burglars were ransacking the Spanish goalkeeper's Merseyside home, it emerged on Wednesday.

Reina returned home after one of the most memorable evenings of his playing career to find that thieves had made off with jewellery, a top-of-the-range audiovisual system and his Porsche Cayenne car, local police said.

The sports car was later found burnt out in another area of the city.

The robbery during Liverpool's clash with Chelsea on Tuesday was the latest in a series of incidents in which footballers have been targeted, often while they have been playing matches.

Reina's predecessor as Liverpool's number one goalkeeper, Jerzy Dudek, was burgled in June 2006. He also lost a Porsche and jewellery but was more distraught that the thieves took his 2005 European Cup winners' medal.

Danish defender Daniel Agger, who scored for Liverpool on Tuesday night, had his home in the city's suburbs burgled in September last year.

Reds striker Peter Crouch's house was targeted in the same month while he was on England duty and Everton winger Andy van der Meide was burgled twice last year, including one raid in which his pedigree puppy was taken.

Wayne Rooney also lost memorabilia, including his BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year trophy, when his parents' Liverpool home was burgled in July 2006.

One footballer that Merseyside's burglars have not been able to profit from is former Everton striker Duncan Ferguson.

During his playing days, 'Big Dunc' twice apprehended would-be robbers at his home. The first incident, involving two intruders, ended with one of them fleeing for his life while Ferguson 'restrained' and then sat on the other one until the police arrived.

A later incident resulted in the 'battered and bruised' burglar unsuccessfully attempting to sue the former Scotland international player for damages.

Floods disrupt SL celebrations

AFP, Colombo

Two people were killed in heavy rains in Sri Lanka's capital Wednesday while flash floods caused traffic jams and disrupted ceremonies to welcome back the national cricket team.

Colombo National Hospital spokeswoman Pushpa Soysa said one woman died after being swept away in the flood waters while another was struck by lightning as she stepped off a bus.

The meteorology department said Colombo received over 12 centimetres (nearly five inches) of rain during the 24 hours to Thursday morning.

Heavy rains did not deter cricket fans who lined up along the road leading from the international airport to Colombo, a distance of 35 kilometres (21 miles), to greet the team who emerged runners-up in the eight-week long World Cup tournament.

Official ceremonies were however disrupted, with organisers having to shift the welcoming party indoors to Sri Lanka Cricket offices from the open air Independence Square.

Motorists were struck in lengthy traffic jams, while most of Colombo's roads were under water, partly due to the lack of maintenance to the city's drainage systems.

Colombo's sewer and storm water systems were constructed between 1906 and 1913 and designed to serve a population of around 400,000.



Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene (R) gives the thumbs-up sign to fans who braved heavy rains to greet the team on their delayed return to Colombo on Thursday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Infinite-imial

5 October stone

9 Hot tub

12 Birthright

13 Finished

14 "Skip to My --"

15 Where patrons get gouged

17 Under the weather

18 Aide

19 Yawned

21 Tag player

22 Entry-ways

24 Lascivious look

27 Grooved on

28 The folks

31 Mail (cocktail)

32 Work with

33 Indivisible

34 Proof-reader's find

36 -- out a living

37 Put two and two together

38 Ride into space?

40 Functioning

41 Starbucks brew

43 Subordinate

45 Blood-hound's clue

47 Kimono closer

48 Sandals

51 Dry, to a winner

52 Mexican entree

53 Prior nights

54 Wapiti

55 Undo a dele

56 What-ever's left

20 Illustrations

22 Poorly lit

23 Curved molding

1 -- support

2 Gilligan's home

3 Apprehend

4 1980s materialist

5 Careless

6 Luau

7 Raggedy one

8 Release

9 Careless

10 Vaulter's prop

11 Bygone, to Burns

16 Namath, for many years

20 Illustrations

22 Poorly lit

23 Curved molding

1 -- support

Solution time: 25 mins.

41 Lummo

42 First victim

43 Location

44 Wander

45 Tarzan's

46 Antigone

48 Long, crosser

50 "Rocks"

CRYPTOQUIP

FC F V M K X J K X B P X Z J H

CHHP X B K M T H Z F Z J H K X J F Z R

OM K X J Q G F Z J T, F J G R Q J

OK X J F V J X V J X V J F V

Yesterday's Cryptopik: TO HONOR THE VERY BEST MASONS IN THE BUSINESS, MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE ANNUAL STONY AWARDS.

Today's Cryptopik Clue: H equals O