



Asafa Powell (C) of Jamaica leads the pack as he wins the men's 100-metre of the Artur Takac memorial meet in Belgrade on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Powell shines in season opener

AFP, Belgrade

Jamaica's 100 metres world record holder Asafa Powell impressed on his opening race of the season here on Tuesday winning in a time of 9.97 seconds to record the first time ever under 10sec in Serbia.

Powell, who has been off injured for several weeks with tendinitis in his right knee, easily beat home the Dutch Antilles Churandi Martina, who timed 10.11sec, while another Jamaican Michael Frater was third in 10.19sec.

Powell was extremely relaxed and after the race saluted the record 20,000 spectators who turned up to see the Commonwealth champion become the first athlete this season to run under 10sec.

"I was under pressure because it was my first race of the season," admitted Powell.

"However I am happy with my performance. The weather was superb and it was an extremely well organised event."

"To date my season has been disturbed but I am feeling very relaxed and hungry for more competition."

Powell will next race at the meeting in Eugene, Oregon, on June 10, probably over 200m, before returning to Europe for the first Golden League meeting in Oslo on June 15.

Powell's compatriot Sherone Simpson, the fastest woman in the world last season, was also set to make her debut but had to pull out during the warm-up with a painful thigh.

In her absence Bulgarian Yvet Lalova prevailed in her first 100m in two years after being out with a serious knee injury.

America's 2000 Olympics 400m hurdles champion Angelo Taylor showed he is no slack performer over the flat 400m as he stroled home in another time under 45sec, 44.98.

Kenya's Moses Maisai put in another noteworthy performance on the night timing the best mark of the season for the 5,000m of 13min 08.81sec.

Testing time

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Cameroonian Soleiman Nchohau, the yellow-orange haired who has trained with the side for two days and last-minute arrival Obi Michael John, namesake of Chelsea's Nigerian superstar. The striker arrived in the capital last night from Vietnam.

Abahani, who wrestled the responsibilities of coaching on old-horse Amalesh Sen after letting go Argentine coach Diego Cruciani, retained Ghanaian forward Awdud Ibrahim.

Manager Satyajit Das Rupu told that Argentine defender Mariano Caporale has ensured his return after taking care of some family affairs in Buenos Aires.

Lower half sides Rahmatganj, Chittagong Abahani, Farashganj and Arambagh all have already included new faces.

12TH WEEK FIXTURES

May 30: Muktiyoddha v Chittagong Mohammedan (BNS)
June 1: Brothers v Farashganj (BNS); Khulna Abahani v Chittagong Abahani (Khulna Stadium)
June 2: Arambagh v Rahmatganj (BNS)
June 3: Russel v Mohammedan

Simon could be back

BBC ONLINE, undated

Simon Jones could be back bowling by Sunday after seeing a specialist in Loughborough over his knee problems.

The England paceman missed most of last season after surgery in America and inflammation of the joint has continued to plague the 28-year-old this term.

Jones will miss the Championship game with Essex on Wednesday but could play the weekend's Friends Provident Trophy match with Hampshire at Swans.

The bowler has managed just 37 overs in the Championship so far this season.

Sarwan out of tour

AFP, Leeds

West Indies captain Ramnaresh Sarwan was ruled out on Tuesday of the remainder of his side's Test and one-day series in England after injuring his shoulder in the second Test at Headingley, tour manager Michael Findlay announced.

Sarwan injured himself while chasing a ball to the boundary on the first day of the second Test against England here at Headingley and fell heavily on his right shoulder.

Sarwan was unable to bat in either innings as West Indies were beaten by an innings and 283 runs -- their largest Test innings defeat of all-time.

"Unfortunately Sarwan's injury will take approximately six weeks to heal and as a result he will not be able to take any further part in this tour," Findlay said here on Tuesday at the squad's hotel.

Sarwan said: "I am very disappointed that I would not be able to continue on tour. But I have spoken with the players and wished them well for the remainder of the Test series and the Twenty20 games and the one-day internationals."

"I have confidence that the boys will be able to rebound after the defeat at Headingley and give a better account of themselves and the team

Glamorgan captain David Hemp said: "It's very frustrating for Simon because his knee keeps swelling up."

Jones played no part in Monday's three-wicket loss to Surrey in the Friends Provident Trophy at Cressley, in a match that saw his county's bowling resources stretched to the limit.

As well as Jones, former skipper Robert Croft and Andrew Davies were both missing, while Damien Wright pulled up after four balls and teenager James Harris was absent taking exams.

"I feel sorry for Simon, as he is resting his knee and doing everything he is told," Hemp added.

"He is taking 10 days off or a week off after a game as stipulated by the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board), but to come back

after that with the knee still swollen is very disappointing."

"Simon gets treated by us and he is in constant consultation with the ECB physios, but the fact that it's swollen up again after a period of rest is a bit concerning and he's gone back up to talk to them."

Wright injured a thigh muscle during Monday's one-day match at Cressley, and faces a spell of two to four weeks on the sidelines.

Spinner Croft, who sustained a calf strain last week at Swansea, is again doubtful and will have a late fitness test to see if he will figure against Essex.

Glamorgan call up Michael O'Shea, Nicky Peng and Gareth Rees for their first Championship appearances of the summer, while Harris is also available following his AS-level exams.

Kerr dies at 96

CRICINFO, undated

Jack Kerr, who played seven Tests for New Zealand in the 1930s and later went on to become the president of New Zealand Cricket, died in Christchurch on Sunday at the age of 96.

At the time of his death he was the second oldest living Test cricketer, being ten days younger than Eric Tindall, who toured England with him in 1937. He is the third longest lived Test player of all time, being Tindall and Francis MacKinnon.

A World War II veteran, Kerr maintained a link with cricket after his playing days, taking up coaching and the administration of the game. He was the manager of the New Zealand team which toured South Africa in 1953-54 and he also had a stint as the chairman of the New Zealand Cricket Council.

"Jack (Kerr) made a significant contribution to New Zealand Cricket and the New Zealand Cricket Foundation over a number of years and his support was warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated," New Zealand Cricket Chairman Sir John Anderson said.

Kerr, who was an accountant by profession, was a right-hand opening batsman who had a long domestic career. He scored 4839 runs in first-class cricket at an average of 32.19. He was at his best in 1935-36 when he made 146 not out and 71 for Canterbury against Percy Holmes's MCC tourists, and followed up with two centuries in the unofficial "Tests" -- 105 not out at Wellington and 132 at Christchurch.

Ghaem joins

FROM PAGE 17
In other fourth round matches at the NSC conference room, Reefat drew with Nguyen, Rakib drew with Rajib, Nasir shared points with Amin.

GM Ziaur Rahman, who lost to Nasir in the last round, drew with Lalith Babu of India, GM Niaz Murshed drew with FM Taibur Rahman, IM PDS Girinath of India beat FM Rezaul Haque, FM Abu Sufian Shakib beat Mohammad Javed, Pakistani IM Mahmood Lodhi defeated Mohammad Ali, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag drew with Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon beat Debaraj Chatterjee and Monir Hossain of beat Sohel Chowdhury.

Series in doubt for Flintoff

AFP, London

England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff could miss the rest of the series against the West Indies after being told he needs surgery on his troublesome left ankle.

Flintoff had hoped to prove his fitness for the third Test against West Indies next week after being forced to miss the opening two games of the series.

However after a practice session in the nets which left him feeling soreness the 29-year-old was advised he needed to have an exploratory arthroscopy on his left ankle.

England Cricket Board medical officer Dr Nick Pierce said: "Andrew Flintoff has undergone rigorous fitness testing over the past two days, most recently 30 minutes of net bowling on Tuesday, but has reacted to the testing with further discomfort in his left ankle."

"Despite intense conservative treatment and rehabilitation with England and Lancashire's medical teams, Andrew's ankle has continued to cause him discomfort when bowling at full capacity."

"As a consequence he will undergo an exploratory arthroscopy on his left ankle over the weekend."

England will learn more about the length of time Flintoff will be sidelined after the operation.

Flintoff has twice had surgery for unrelated problems on the same left ankle in the past three years.

Flintoff said: "Obviously I'm bitterly disappointed to face another operation on my ankle as I really thought I was making progress with the injury over the past few weeks."

"I've been working really hard on my game and the rest and rehabilitation appeared to be helping the ankle but after giving it a strong workout this week, it now seems that an operation is the only option."

BCCI-Zee fallout

AFP, New Delhi

India's one-day series with South Africa in Ireland next month is in doubt following the cancellation of a deal between the Indian cricket board and the broadcast rights holder, a report said Wednesday.

Private broadcaster Zee Television pulled out of the five-year deal they signed with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to televise matches involving India at neutral venues, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

The BCCI had signed the deal with Zee after promising to play at least 25 matches in a year at neutral venues, including the three-match series in Belfast from June 26 to July 1.

"We have decided to scrap the deal," the news agency quoted top Zee official Ashish Kaul as saying.

Wish he was

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Pietersen's case for an England Test place was championed by another Australian in Shane Warne, his captain at Hampshire, and Langer, who in 10 Tests scored 7,696 runs at an average of 45.27, said Pietersen deserved all the accolades coming his way.

"I am pleased to see him enjoying his success because not only is he entertaining to watch but I have always found him to be a very respectful young man, who has an enormous thirst for knowledge of how he can become the best player in the world."

"As confident as he is on the field he is a very likeable person off it and while he makes an Australian's hair bristle when you compete against him, he is the sort of player we like to see doing well."

Ronaldinho gets

FROM PAGE 20

In two weeks time against Espanyol and then return to face relegated Gimnastic Tarragona for a match which could earn the Catalan club their third straight title success.

Six points

FROM PAGE 20

In no doubt places at next year's Euro 2008 championships are up for grabs, should Germany qualify, and no allowance will be made for the weakened national squad.

"I have phoned all the players during the past few days and they are all highly motivated," he said. "It is always a pity if the captain is absent, but we have won other games without him and there are other players who can show leadership."

One factor in Germany's favour is the majority of the squad have had a two week break to recover from bumps and bruises, so only goalkeeper Timo Hildebrand and striker Mario Gomez, who played for Stuttgart in last weekend's German Cup final, have had little time to rest.

Players want foreigner

CRICINFO, undated

Who will be India's next coach is very much an open question. When the seven-member committee formed to tackle this very issue meets on June 4, it is likely to be faced with two conflicting opinions: the current players would like the job to go to a foreigner, whereas a campaign, championed by no less than Sunil Gavaskar, a member of the committee himself, is building up from former cricketers to appoint an Indian.

In a significant development, four senior members of the Indian team, Rahul Dravid, the captain, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and Anil Kumble, are learnt to have met Sharad Pawar, the Indian board president, and conveyed their wish to be coached by a foreigner. The meeting took place during India's tour of Bangladesh.

There is precedence of the players' views playing a decisive role in the appointment of the coach. John Wright, who was appointed India's first foreign coach in 2000, was recommended by Rahul Dravid, who had played under Wright for Kent in the County Championship in England and when Wright's contract came

up for renewal, he was publicly backed by Tendulkar and Ganguly. And in 2005, when there was a clamour for a homegrown coach, the job went to Greg Chappell, whose candidature was supported by, ironically, Ganguly.

This time too, the opinions are divided. Though Day Whatmore, with whom some of the BCCI officials have had informal talks, has emerged as a strong candidate, the final decision is yet to be taken. And lobbying for an Indian coach has begun, with Gavaskar and Kapil Dev leading the way.

Gavaskar, writing in his column in the Mumbai tabloid Mid Day, has made some thinly-veiled attacks on Whatmore, who is believed to be the frontrunner. Writing after the second Test against India, Gavaskar pointed to the "lack of cricketing acumen" in the Bangladesh camp following their decision to bat first.

"It's here that Bangladesh suffered the most, for even allowing for the fact that Habibul Bashar is not the wildest of skippers, it was clear that he had little help, and if anything, the lack of tactical input was exposed by the decision to field first in the last Test as well as that of not trying for a win in the first Test when the target was achievable with some bold batting."

Kapil Dev, was even more direct.

"Who is Whatmore," he thundered in an interview in the Telegraph, the Kolkata based daily. "Why do we need to talk about Whatmore? Or, for that matter, anybody not associated with our team at this point in time. In my opinion, when Ravi (Shastri) isn't available after Bangladesh, the Board should give the coach's powers to Venkatesh Prasad and Robin Singh, both of whom have played international cricket and are currently working with the boys."

Kapil, who is director of the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore, has already made his preferences clear by appointing Rajinder Goel, Sarkar Talwar and Rajinder Pal, to instruct the trainees.

Interestingly, while the focus has been solely on Whatmore, the name of Graham Ford has suddenly begun to do the rounds as a contender. Ford, who prefers to be low-key, had successful stints with South Africa, Natal and Kent, and could be a good man for the job. However, it is unclear whether the board has even got in touch with Ford to check on his availability or interest. From all indications the board is waiting till the meeting in Bangalore on June 4, set to begin sometime in the evening, to make its moves.

Classy Blewett retires

CRICINFO, undated

Greg Blewett, who was a semi-regular member of the Australia team during the late 1990s, has retired from first-class cricket.

Blewett, 35, will stay at South Australia as a high-performance batting coach while also pursuing his commentating career.

Blewett's run-scoring gradually declined over the last few years and his axing from the South Australia one-day team in December signalled the end of his 16-year state career. He had already lost his place in the Pura Cup side in 2005-06 as the Redbacks decided to blood some younger batsmen. Late last year, he vented his anger at being dumped from the side, calling the state's selectors "clowns".

Although he regrets that comment, Blewett said he would continue to "have issues" with certain individuals at the SACA. "I think ideally I could still play for a couple of years, physically," Blewett told The Advertiser. "I don't necessarily agree with a lot of things that have happened in the past 12 months but I accept them."

Despite playing 46 Tests and 32 ODIs from 1994-95 to 1999-2000, Blewett never quite cemented his spot in the national line-up. Nor could Australia decide exactly how to use him; he started his Test career at No. 6, had a moderately successful switch to No. 3, dropped back down to No. 6 and finished as an opener.

He did, however, write his name into the record books as soon as he burst onto the international scene aged 23 in the 1994-95 Ashes series. Blewett made 102 not out on debut at his home-ground at Adelaide and followed up in the next Test with 115 at Perth, making him only the third Australian -- the others were Bill Ponsford and Doug Walters -- to score a century in each of his first two Tests.

Blewett established a reputation as a reliable member of the middle-order and entertained crowds with his fluent cuts and cover drives, and his dangerous

hooks and pulls. There were a few too many unfulfilled starts from Blewett, but he certainly got it right at Johannesburg in 1996-97, when he and Steve Waugh together added 385.

It was the second-highest fifth-wicket partnership ever in Tests, falling just short of Don Bradman and Sid Barnes's 405-run effort. Blewett and Waugh batted right through the third day, which was the first time any pair had achieved the feat against South Africa. Blewett finished with 214, which was easily the high point of a Test career that yielded only four centuries.

There were times when Blewett struggled to keep out fast balls cutting in towards his stumps; that was evident when he was bowled



GREG BLEWETT

for 99 twice in the 1997 calendar year. High-class spin bowling also caused him problems.

A string of low scores in India in 1997-98 lost him his Test place but he returned a year later and reinvented himself as an opening partner for Michael Slater after Mark Taylor's retirement. There were moments of success and a 269-run stand against Pakistan at Brisbane was the highlight. Although some commentators believed the pair would be Australia's openers for many years, Blewett did not reach triple-figures in the role and was replaced by Matthew Hayden on the 1999-2000 tour of New Zealand.

Blewett's Test career ended at

the age of 28, and his 46 Tests brought him 2552 runs at 34.02. Surprisingly for a batsman who was such an excellent fieldsmen and a better-than-average part-time medium-pace bowler, Blewett could not hold down a place in the Australia limited-overs team and from his 32 ODIs he averaged only 20.4 with the bat.

His failure to convert his starts at Test level frustrated Blewett. "I probably underachieved a bit for Australia," he said. "I think I was good enough to average 40 but didn't so that is a regret. It was something that frustrated me throughout my career. I got a lot of fifties."

Blewett, who spent time with Kent, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, made his first-class debut at the age of 20 in 1991-92, in a South Australia-Queensland clash that was also the first match for Hayden. He was part of the Redbacks' 1995-96 Sheffield Shield-winning side, scoring 72 in the final, and was a consistent accumulator for his state.

In 2000-01, he compiled 1162 Pura Cup runs at 68.35 as he tried in vain to work his way back into the Test side. He retained his national contract for one more season but his best years were behind him. Back, hand and thigh injuries limited his output in recent seasons and Blewett's first-class career ended on 232 matches, with 17,352 runs at 44.49.

Real renew

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in touch with Kaka's agent over a possible move.

The 1982-born starlet joined the Via Turati outfit in August 2003 after Chelsea were pipped to his signature.

Meanwhile, a report in Marca claims that Ancelotti could take over at Barcelona during the summer.

That, however, seems unlikely given that Ancelotti is in talks over a Rossoneri extension following Champions League glory.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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RECKONED THAT WAS ONE WAY TO WEIGH WHEY.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: W equals O