

Benoit, family found dead

AP, Fayetteville

WWE wrestler Chris Benoit, his wife and son were found dead Monday and police said they were investigating the deaths as a homicide.

Lt. Tommy Pope of the Fayette County Sheriff's Department said the three were found at their home about 2:30 p.m., but refused to release details.

Pope said results of autopsies on Benoit, his wife Nancy, and 7-year-old son Daniel were expected Tuesday.

Benoit, 40, was a former world heavyweight champion, Intercontinental champion and held several tag-team titles over his career.

"WWE extends its sincerest thoughts and prayers to the Benoit family's relatives and loved ones in this time of tragedy," the federation said in a statement on its Web site.

Benoit was scheduled to perform at the "Vengeance" pay-per-view event Sunday night in Houston, but was replaced at the last minute because of what announcer Jim Ross called "personal reasons."

Benoit, a Canadian native, maintained a home in metro Atlanta from the time he wrestled for the defunct World Championship Wrestling.

The WWE cancelled its live "Monday Night RAW" card in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Sikandar all for Whatmore

PTI, Chennai

Former Pakistan off-spinner Iqbal Sikandar feels political interference is keeping away the country's former cricketers from taking up the job of national coach.

Sikandar, training the Asian Cricket Council's players from seven countries at the MRF Pace Foundation here, said politicians often influence the selection process in Pakistan.

"In Pakistan, the politicians are known for forcing their way into everything. They would telephone and insist on getting their boys picked for the national team whether they deserve a berth or not," Sikandar told PTI.

"Though communication problems do exist among former players, the main cause for them not volunteering to take up the job as coach is the political interference," he added.

Sikander, however, believes a foreign coach would be immune to this problem.

"This (interference) has been the problem for former cricketers, who will not have a choice but a foreigner will not allow such interference.

"There is a clamour for a foreigner to do the job and Dav Whatmore is the right person to put Pakistan back to their winning ways," he said.

Sikandar said Whatmore was capable of changing fortunes of their cricketing side.

"Whatmore has not played as many Test matches as Greg Chappell. But Greg was not successful with the Indian team. Whatmore is one of the best amongst the coaches available in the cricketing world today," he added.

Junior bails

FROM PAGE 17 and drilled a low drive into the right hand post of Nizam, who appeared to be blind-sighted by his teammates.

The Brothers keeper, however, pulled off two fine saves in the second half when he palmed over a 30-yarder by Ighir before going full stretch to deny Tanvir's shot.

Wajed Gaziz's boys suddenly went on the defensive, leaving Younes as the lone striker after Bulbul was taken off for Pradip.

This allowed Brothers to press hard and almost score the equaliser in the 75th minute but for fullback Aminul's goalline save on a header by Shakil during a corner.

The pressure finally told in the dying moments as Pradip committed the unpardonable mistake in a bid to stop Junior and conceded the spotkick.

Yellow cards: Pradip (Russel) and Jewel Rana, Shuvra (Brothers)

TEAMS

RUSSEL: Zia, Aminul, Bourdif, Hassan, Mishu (Yusuf), Ighir, Pappu, Saad, Tanvir (Kaiser), Bulbul (Pradip) and Younes.

BROTHERS: Nizam, Shuvra, Jewel, Masud Rana, Rony, Faisal (Shakil), Rintu (Liton), Inani, Mamun, Junior and Jalal (Tapu).

Mauresmo

FROM PAGE 20

Lleyton Hewitt, the 2002 champion and the last man to win Wimbledon before Federer began his winning streak, was also in action, against British wildcard Richard Bloomfield.

Triple women's champion Venus Williams was up against Russia's Alla Kudryavtseva.



PHOTO: STAR

Pakistan World Cup winner Aaquib Javed imparts some tips on the front arm movement of a fast bowler to the final round qualifiers of the GrameenPhone Pacer Hunt programme at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

Aaquib suggests changes

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Pakistan National Cricket Academy coach Aaquib Javed yesterday opined that club cricket structure in Bangladesh should be changed to create quality fast bowlers.

"To have better fast bowlers, Bangladesh needs to change its club cricket structure a little bit," the former Pakistan speedster told at a press conference at BKSP in Savar.

Aaquib, who arrived in Dhaka on Monday, is offering specialised coaching to selected pace bowlers at the ongoing GrameenPhone Pacer Hunt Camp (phase-3).

During a break in the day's camp, the 1992 World Cup winner admitted that club cricket in Bangladesh is very competitive but he felt that matches are played on dead pitches.

Aaquib said Pakistan produces pacers in numbers because 90 per cent matches are played on seaming pitches.

He also emphasised on producing fast bowlers and good leg spinners for success at international level.

He suggested introducing foreign fast bowlers in first class cricket, saying: "The local fast bowlers would also be able to learn from them.

"My aim here is to improve the bowlers' speed whatever they are having at the moment because to swing the ball is not a big deal but to bowl fast is very difficult."

Asked whether he was happy with the action of the local youngsters, he said, "I am not fully happy. Nobody is perfect and it varies from person to person."

Former Bangladesh skipper and now National Cricket Academy operations manager Khaled Mahmud, national cricket academy coaches Dipu Roy Chowdhury and Golam Faruque Suru, AGM (head of market communications) of GrameenPhone Mir Nawbat Ali were also present at the press conference.

"We've been associated with the development of Bangladesh

cricket and we will try to engage us with spinner and wicketkeeper hunt programmes in the future if the board wants," said Nawbat Ali.

Salahuddin Mohammad, a pacer from Sathkira, generating the highest speed of 83 kph in the camp said he has been benefited by the advice of Aaquib.

Tevez prefers

FROM PAGE 20

reiterated that Real are "waiting with arms open" for the Brazilian but if he decides to stay put, the Spanish giants could turn their attentions elsewhere and will likely step up their interest in Tevez.

Di Michele

FROM PAGE 20

also been charged with an involvement in the betting scandal.

It has long been forbidden for any player in Italy to bet on matches in their own championship, but in 2005 the FIGC extended that ban to include any form of gambling.

Russel win opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Kira Chakra got off to an auspicious start in the AB Bank Senior Division Table Tennis super league yesterday when the holders routed Wari 3-0 at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium.

Russel, who began the 5-team championship leg behind Biman, did not drop a single set as Mostafa blanked Shahed 3-0 while Mahbub and Kachi beat Rokin and Baban respectively by identical margins.

In women's league, defending champions Abahani defeated Armenian Girls in straight sets while Biman and Bangladesh Chemical and Perfumery Society also won in straight sets against Lalbagh TTA and Moler TTC.

Rajshahi run riot

SPORTS REPORTER

Remon and Shishu slotted hatricks to inspire Rajshahi humiliate Kishoreganj 19-0 in yesterday's 27th National Hockey Championship match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium.

Remon netted five goals while Shishu banged four in Rajshahi's goal feast while Sabbir Rana, Faruk, Rajan and Krishna each scored twice in the biggest victory of the meet so far.

In the day's matches, Tangail outplayed Comilla 5-0 with a brace from Ariful Haque Prince Bangladesh Navy shared points with Faridpur in a 1-1 draw.

Handling Murali

FROM PAGE 17

still believe Bangladesh are an improving side and are in a learning process," Vaas said.

"I thought today was the day to get my deserved Test hundred. I was waiting for this day for long because I battled well for the last couple of years. And you know getting hundred in Test cricket is always important and exciting for any cricketer. And I got the opportunity today," said the 33-year old.

On the other hand, Prasanna Jayawardene with whom Vaas made a record breaking 223 for the seventh wicket said that his domestic and A team performances were inspirational.

"I worked hard, that was the key behind my success. I played well in domestic competition and A matches, which helped me a lot. These days, a wicketkeeper must contribute as a batsman," Prasanna told.

Taibu returning?

FROM PAGE 17

falling out with the Zimbabwe board – in particular chairman Peter Chingoka and managing director Ozias Bvute – over player welfare and governance issues. He also claimed his family had been threatened.

He had stints in the UK and Namibia, where he never really established himself, and has periodically returned home. However, in the last month, Taibu has reportedly been training with the Zimbabwe team in Harare and looking very much involved in the thick of things, although at first he was said to be practicing to stay in form.

But sources close to Taibu have revealed that he is engaged in talks with management and influential board directors, and chances are that if they agree terms, he will be drafted back into the team.

It is said Taibu has received support from most of the players who want him to be reinstated as captain.

WICB warns

FROM PAGE 17

withstanding his unwillingness to apologise, Mr Gayle will understand the seriousness of his actions and avoid any further statements or behaviour that will force the WICB to take drastic and immediate action against him."

West Indies, who recently lost their four-match Test series against England 3-0, face England in back-to-back Twenty20 matches at The Oval starting on Thursday before taking on their hosts in three one-day internationals.

West Indies lost a Twenty20 match against Derbyshire by 51 runs on Sunday.

It was all a far cry from the 1980s when West Indies were the dominant force in world cricket.

The state of disarray within the Caribbean game had previously been exposed when West Indies had to call-up five players from English league clubs and universities to make up the numbers against England A at Worcester after three of their 14-man one-day squad arrived too late for the game.

Rows between the board and the West Indies Players' Association have become commonplace in recent years.

An arbitration panel last week found for the fifth time in as many hearings in favour of the players. They ruled the England tour fell outside the International Cricket Council's Future Tours Programme and therefore the players were entitled to additional payments.

KP raring to go

BBC Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

After 11 days of cricket in barely two weeks, most professional cricketers would be desperate for a day at home doing something nondescript.

Perhaps a gentle drive with the missus to a country pub, a few holes of golf or reclining on the living-room sofa with a cup of tea and a magazine might suffice.

But then the phrase "most professional cricketers" does not include Kevin Peter Pietersen, who has instead used a rare day off to promote Kevin Pietersen.

Well that's perhaps a little bit unfair. He has actually signed up to a couple of public relations "opportunities" in central London.

The second engagement takes place in Soho, at a nightclub called Punk.

It is slightly unnerving to be served weird-coloured drinks by girls in white hot pants at 3pm on a weekday.

But this is how these places operate – and if the tabloids are to be believed, KP would know a thing or two about West End nightspots.

In the early stages of the West Indies tour, he took his great mate Chris Gayle, plus Ramnaresh Sarwan and Runako Morton, out to dinner not far from here.

"They are very, very nice guys," he tells BBC Sport at the launch of Kevin Pietersen Pro Cricket 2007.

"I get on really well with them. Chris is a good friend of mine. I've

known him for two years and we keep in touch.

"You play the sport to make friends, to enjoy yourself. It's a very important part of the game."

Pietersen dismisses the suggestion of discord within the Windies camp and is hoping for some exciting cricket in the one-day internationals against them.

"I've played against them twice. Both times we chased down 300, once in Ahmedabad and once in Barbados.

"They were great exciting games, so hopefully we can get some really good games in the next couple of weeks which people deserve."

West Indies generally provided meek opposition in the Tests, but if Gayle can start middling a few more of his expansive drives – it might be a different story in the shorter game.

"He's a very good player," says Pietersen. "I played with him in the world team as well and he's a sensational talent."

"He's a good man and I've got a lot of time for him. He plays the game in the right spirit."

Gayle, also the West Indies captain for the remainder of their tour, had Pietersen caught at slip with England just a few runs from the winning-post in the Riverside Test.

Pietersen's verdict? "I'm big enough to accept it. He's a world-class performer so I'm not embarrassed."

Unlike other sides, England do not pick official vice-captains any more. But Pietersen wants to give Paul Collingwood plenty of assis-

stance with team tactics.

He is also keen to protect his status as the number one batsman in one-day cricket.

"I'd love to keep it. I strive to be the best player in the world and the best I can possibly be," he says.

"I just try to look to improve every single day and if I keep the tag I do, if I don't I just keep on making sure I go through the right processes every day and wherever that takes me it takes me."

Pietersen is taken aback a bit when I inquire if the England dressing-room is a quieter place without the injured Andrew Flintoff.

"The dressing-room is much of a muchness; no the dressing-room's fine," he vehemently insists.

But along with many others around the England set-up he longs to see Flintoff and Simon Jones bowling together for England again.

With domestic Twenty20 now upon us, it is also a relevant opportunity to ask if Pietersen regrets playing so little for Hampshire.

"To be honest, mate, we play so much international cricket it's not something that frustrates me at all," he replies.

"We play international cricket for 12 months a year so when we get our time off we deserve our time off."

Point taken.

Violence in T20 match

BBC Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Middlesex's Twenty20 match against Hampshire was marred when stones were thrown at the away coach and valuables stolen from the home dressing-room.

Middlesex won the match at Southgate, which was reduced to 12 overs per side following heavy rain.

Afterwards Hampshire wicketkeeper Nic Pothas told BBC Sport: "We make the effort to play in dangerous conditions and that's the thanks you get."

"We took a stand -- we refused to sign autographs after the game."

He added: "It's very unfortunate. The windows of the bus have been smashed and the Middlesex guys have had all their valuables stolen."

"Last year we had an unsavoury incident when Dom Thornely got spat at Sussex."

"We are big boys. If people take the mickey out of you or comment about the way you look that's happy days."

"But if people talk about what they want to do to your mother and it starts going to a more personal level

then we have to take a stand.

"If you do that to us, then we won't sign autographs for your kids."

In a separate incident, vandals climbed over perimeter fences in the early hours of Tuesday morning and trashed hospitality marquees and pushed toilets over.

Middlesex play most of their home games at Lord's, but have started to play more regularly at the Walker Ground in Southgate.

It is a picturesque venue in north London, with a church at one end of the ground.

Middlesex chief executive Vinny Codrington admitted that security at the ground would have to be reviewed.

"The most important thing at the moment is to review security at the ground and perhaps have 24-hour security," he told BBC Sport.

"But we also have to remember that this is a club ground, not a stadium, and these things will happen from time to time."

Codrington said the three incidents were not related and that it was important not to sensationalise them.

"Firstly a kid threw stones at the Hampshire bus from outside the ground, from a cemetery.

"The windows were double glazed and he broke an outer window. The players weren't on the bus. Only the driver was, and he wasn't overly concerned."

"Then one or maybe two kids also got into the Middlesex dressing room. The lads admit it was stupid of them to leave their valuables in there and not lock the door."

"The Hampshire players put their valuables in a safe place and locked their dressing room door."

"The disappointing thing is that the stewards on the back door of the pavilion did not do their jobs."

"I don't know how the kids managed to get out without being stopped, because they would have had a couple of bats, a couple of wallets and some other kit. They should have been pretty conspicuous."

Police are currently looking into the three incidents.

Southgate is due to host a four-day Championship match against Derbyshire on 8 July, and has five further days of Middlesex cricket in September.

USA's last chance

BBC Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The cricket world – or at least those running the game in countries from Australia to Zambia – assembles in London this week for their annual get-together. However, there will be a notable absentee. For the second time in three years, there will be no representation from the USA.

While the US might not be a major player on the field – it would probably rank just outside the top ten Associates if it ever managed to take to the field – but it does control one of the game's biggest and potentially most lucrative markets. It also is home to one of the

most dysfunctional and unaccountable boards, the USA Cricket Association, and it is its ongoing shenanigans that have twice caused the ICC to suspend it from the international game.

A fortnight ago, in Washington, the two factions claiming to have the right to run the game in the USA met with Ken Gordon, the WICB's president, acting as peacemaker. The irony of Gordon, head of a board under fire from almost every side and millions of dollars in debt, being asked to sort out someone else's dirty linen caused more than a few dry smiles. But the two-day sit-down ended with a brief statement that the two sides had agreed to work together to resolve their problems.

The announcement was hardly a hold-the-front-page moment. For one thing, although there are thousands of players in the USA, and millions of fans, the USACA has almost no effect on anything they do. As one administrator told me, it could disappear tomorrow and nothing would change. The other issue is that both parties agreed not to say anything. To anyone.

Secrecy has been one of the major gripes against the USACA. It says almost nothing to anyone, and the tiny ruling group has been known to shut out its own directors if it sees fit. So while those who cared might have hoped that a deal would herald an era of transparency, they were instead given a familiar wall of silence.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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18 Blue	49 Corn spike	35 Tart-tasting																	
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21 Malicious	51 Differently	39 Pedestal occupant																	
22 Diving bird	52 Elev.	40 Sailors																	
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26 Experience	54 Holy cow!"	42 Stolen goods																	
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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF SOMEBODY
DETONATED EXPLOSIVES BY YOU, I EXPECT
THAT MIGHT HAVE A BLASTING EFFECT ON
YOU.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals P