

Ronaldinho feels honoured

AFP, Porto Alegre

Brazilian footballer Ronaldinho took a turn in carrying the torch ahead of the 2007 Pan-American Games, to be held in Rio de Janeiro from July 13-29.

Grinning broadly throughout, Ronaldinho carried the flame for a short while during its trip to his hometown of Porto Alegre in the south of the vast country.

"I'm very touched. This is a great honour for me, especially as it's in my town," said Ronaldinho.

The Pan-American Games flame was lit on June 11 by Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and will travel through 42 cities and towns - representing the 42 countries in the region - before coming to rest in Rio.

Morgan next ICC chief

AFP, London

David Morgan, chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), will become International Cricket Council (ICC) president in 2008, the global governing body announced here on Friday.

Morgan's appointment was confirmed at a press conference at The Oval following a two-day meeting of the ICC's executive board in London.

The former chairman of Glamorgan, the one Welsh side in England's 18 first-class counties, will replace Ray Mali who has been acting president since fellow South African Percy Sonn died last month.

Morgan will take over from Mali in May next year. Initially, the ICC board had been split between Morgan and India's Sharad Pawar over who should succeed Sonn.

But, in what appeared to be a compromise decision, Morgan will only be in the post for two years with Pawar due to replace him in 2010 before he too serves a two-year term ending in 2012.

The ICC announced that from 2008, all presidential terms would be limited to two years with no option for a third year in office.

Morgan is now set to relinquish his role within the ECB and Pawar is also due to step down from his position as president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India within the next 12 months.

"I am delighted and greatly honoured to take on the role of ICC president-elect and, from June 2008, the ICC Presidency," said Morgan in an ICC statement.

"My immediate priority over the next few weeks is to complete unfinished work with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and also to discuss with the ECB an orderly and timely process for the election of my successor as chairman.

"Thereafter my priority will be to support current president Ray Mali for the remainder of his term in office.

"I am hugely grateful to Ray because it was one year ago that, as president of Cricket South Africa, he made the first approach to me to become a candidate for the role of ICC president."

Mali said: "We now have certainty in terms of who will head up our game for the next five years."

Pawar, who thanked ICC members for their "confidence" in him, added: "I am particularly happy with the approach taken by the governance review committee in looking to resolve the issue of the succession and I believe David Morgan and myself have readily accepted those proposals in a sporting manner."

AFP, London

Zimbabwe's exile from Test cricket is set to continue, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced Friday, amidst reports of financial corruption which the global governing body said it would investigate.

An ICC statement, issued after a two-day executive board meeting in London, said: "Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) reported it is not yet ready to return to Test cricket; it was agreed it would report back when it felt it was ready to step up so that the ICC board could make a decision on the matter.

"In relation to allegations of financial irregularities levelled against ZC, it was agreed there would be an independent audit of ZC's accounts by an internationally recognised firm.

"The results of that audit will be presented to the next meeting of the ICC Board, set for October 2007 in Dubai."

Zimbabwe have been in decline as an international cricket force since a race row in 2005 led to the dismissal of former captain Heath Streak.

In total 15 senior players, all white, were sacked, a move that sparked a chain of events that saw Zimbabwe temporarily suspended from Test cricket before the country's own officials effectively exiled the national side from the five-day game.

Australia, the world's leading Test and one-day side, in May called off a proposed tour of Zimbabwe, due to take place in September, after players were banned from travelling to the African nation by Prime Minister John Howard, a fierce critic of the policies of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.



PHOTO: AFP

Brazilian striker Ronaldinho (L) lights up the Pan American Games' pyre during a ceremony in Porto Alegre on Friday.

Anderson handed United work permit

Football

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United have been boosted by the news £18million Brazilian midfielder Anderson has been granted a work permit. The club initially had an application for a permit knocked back for the 19-year-old on the grounds Anderson does not have enough international caps but United on Friday won an appeal against that decision.

It means the attacking midfielder, who signed from Portuguese side

FC Porto last month, will be part of the United squad for next season.

The club said in a statement: "Manchester United is pleased to confirm that the club has been successful in its application for a work permit for Anderson."

United's representatives attended a Home Office panel of experts on Thursday where they argued that due to his exceptional talent he should be granted a work permit and that only his youth had prevented him from obtaining the requisite number of international caps.

Indeed, Anderson only made his

full international debut for Brazil in the early hours of Thursday morning in the Copa America match against Mexico.

Anderson said earlier this week: "To join Manchester United at 19 is incredible.

"Everything will be different in England - I know that - but I am certain I will adjust quickly to life in England.

"I am proud - and my family is also. For me, everything is new, it's a dream come true."

Dravid takes heart from victory

AFP, Belfast

India captain Rahul Dravid has been heartened by the resilience his side have shown in the run-up to Sunday's one-day international (ODI) series finale against South Africa here at Stormont.

On the eve of Tuesday's opening match of a three-game encounter more than half the India squad were ill with flu and they went down to defeat.

But Dravid's men drew level Friday when, with Sachin Tendulkar making a dashing 93 that saw him become the first cricketer to break the 15,000 ODI run barrier, they beat South Africa by six wickets.

South Africa are second in the International Cricket Council (ICC) one-day rankings, compared to India's sixth, and in November and December of last year enjoyed a 4-0 one-day series win against their current opponents on home soil.

But Dravid was in upbeat mood as India warmed-up for the challenge of a three-Test and seven ODI tour of England starting next month.

"The victory (Friday) is a big boost to the side -- the boys have fought really hard. Our preparation for this tournament wasn't exactly ideal. We've had a tough few days, and the boys have responded really well.

"They have not complained -- we have gone on and done what we needed to do and played good cricket -- and we fully deserve to be level in the series."

'BCCI will be more careful'

PTI, London

After being snubbed by South African Graham Ford, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) would be more careful in handling the coach selection process in the future, said its president Sharad Pawar.

"In future, we will see that these issues are handled carefully," Pawar told PTI on the sidelines of the ICC Annual Meeting here yesterday.

The BCCI was put in an embarrassing situation when Ford, who was chosen ahead of John Emburey, turned down the offer and decided to stay with English county Kent.

Pawar, however, insisted that the board had announced Ford's name only because it was sure about their association.

"Unfortunately, the person we selected didn't join. We asked him if he was ready to join. He said it was just a matter of 'when' and not 'whether' he can join us. He said he wanted to talk to his county and consult them on when he can join us and then he did not join.

"Anyway, we have discussed it among ourselves and took suggestions from former players like (Sunil) Gavaskar and (Ravi) Shastri," he said.

Pawar also said Ford was offered a three-year contract, to be confirmed after one year.

Pawar said the BCCI was now looking for another foreign coach, but there was no time frame for taking a decision in this regard.

SA to go for the kill

Cricket

AFP, Belfast

South Africa captain Jacques Kallis is confident of having his strongest side out for Sunday's one-day series climax against India here at Stormont.

The three-match campaign is all square at 1-1 after the second final over finish in as many games saw India come out on top by six wickets at the Belfast venue on Friday.

South Africa were, however, without fast bowler Dale Steyn -- one of several players on both sides who have succumbed to flu -- and all-rounder Justin Kemp, sidelined with a leg injury.

"Dale's come a long way, Justin Kemp has been having treatment and hopefully, by Sunday we'll have a full squad to choose from," said Kallis.

And the closely-contested nature of the two matches so far left the stand-in skipper eagerly anticipating the series finale.

"It all bodes well for Sunday's game. I think it is going to be a terrific game of cricket."

Kallis has been delighted to see fringe players to the fore this series, preceded by a one-day international each for both sides against Ireland.

For example Morne van Wyk, opening in place of regular captain Graeme Smith, who is recovering from knee surgery, top scored Friday with a career-best 82 in South Africa's 226 for six.

The 28-year-old Free State cricketer, who until this event had been on the sidelines after making his debut against England at Lord's in 2003, was praised by Kallis.

"He's done well. Graeme's been the one in the spot but when you've got guys putting pressure on other guys there's no spot in any team that should be taken for granted."

Van Wyk, a former pupil of Bloemfontein's Grey College, the school attended by late South Africa captain Hansie Cronje, said: "The cricket back home is quite competitive and, like Jacques said, I'm still fairly young.

"You don't know if it (international cricket) is going to come around but you keep on hoping with performances you can get a look in," added van Wyk, who four years ago had a brief spell with Belfast club Instonians.

Off-spinner Thandi Tshabalala and all-rounder Vernon Philander, both 22, have impressed since making their debuts last weekend.

Tshabalala captured the wicket of Sachin Tendulkar for 93 on Friday and, although his eight overs cost 42 runs, all-rounder Kallis said he'd been happy handing over the bulk of the fifth bowler duties to the spinner.

"We wanted to have a good look at Thandi. With the next World Cup being in the sub-continent (in 2011), we realise we have to find a spinner and that is what we are trying to do," pace bowler Kallis explained.

"It was between me and him to be the fifth bowler and he did well."

Although Tendulkar was named

man-of-the-match for an innings which saw him become the first batsman to score 15,000 one-day international runs, the prize could easily have gone to India teammate Yuvraj Singh.

Yuvraj took three for 36 in nine overs with his occasional left-arm spin. And, after a top-order collapse which saw four wickets lost for eight runs, including that of Tendulkar, the 25-year-old made an assured 49 not out, sharing an unbroken stand of 85 with Dinesh Karthik (32 not out).

"When we've done well over the last couple of years the contribution of Yuvraj at the death has been vital," said India captain Rahul Dravid.

India hope to have seamer Ajit Agarkar available for Sunday's match but fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth is set to miss the entire series with flu.

SQUADS

INDIA (from): Rahul Dravid (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Dinesh Karthik, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Piyush Chawla, Ramesh Powar, RP Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ajit Agarkar, Ishant Sharma, Gautam Gambhir, Robin Uthappa.

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Jacques Kallis (captain), Morne van Wyk, AB de Villiers, Herschelle Gibbs, Jean-Paul Duminy, Mark Boucher, Andrew Hall, Vernon Philander, Andre Nel, Charl Langeveldt, Makhaya Ntini, Thandi Tshabalala, Dale Steyn.

First Eng-WI ODI today

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Warwickshire batsman Ian Bell could return to the England team for the first one-day international against West Indies at Lord's on Sunday.

Bell missed the Twenty20 series with a groin injury but could replace Bears teammate Jonathan Trott if he comes through Saturday's net practice.

Wicketkeeper Matt Prior is fit to play despite being hit by a Daren Powell delivery at The Oval on Friday.

West Indies hope Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Devon Smith will be fit to return.

Star batsman Chanderpaul has a right knee injury while all-rounder Smith is battling to overcome a thigh problem.

Meanwhile, AFP adds from London, West Indies wicketkeeper Denesh Ramdin has been reprimanded by the International Cricket Council (ICC) after showing dissent at an umpire's decision during the second Twenty20 international against England here at The Oval on Friday.

Ramdin pleaded guilty to breaching clause 1.3 of the ICC code of conduct, the rule governing dissent, at a post-match hearing held at the London ground on the same day.

The charge related to a comment made by Ramdin to umpire Nigel Long at the end of an over in which Ramdin had an appeal for a catch at the wicket turned down by the English official.

Match referee Mike Procter, who conducted the hearing and imposed the reprimand, said in an ICC statement issued Saturday: "The player was clearly disappointed that an appeal had been turned down by umpire Llong but, at the end of the over, he allowed that disappointment to become dissent and that is completely unacceptable.

"The player was extremely apologetic at the hearing and I took that into account in reaching my decision but any form of dissent cannot be allowed to pass as the game revolves around respect for an umpire's decision," former South Africa all-rounder Procter added.

"The player will now have this mark on his record and that will obviously count against him if he fails to uphold the ICC code of conduct in future."

Level One breaches of the code carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand and a maximum penalty of 50 percent of a player's match fee.

The charge was brought by umpire Llong and the hearing also attended by Ramdin, West Indies captain Chris Gayle and team manager Michael Findlay.

For all Level one breaches, the match referee's decision is final and binding.

England won Friday's match by five wickets to square the two-match Twenty20 series at 1-1 after West Indies' 15-run win at The Oval on Thursday.

The opening match of a three-game one-day international series is scheduled to take place at Lord's on Sunday with the remaining fixtures in the English Midlands, at Edgbaston in Birmingham on July 4 and at Nottingham's Trent Bridge on July 7.

England, prior to the Twenty20s, won a four-match Test series against the West Indies 3-0.

TEAMS

ENGLAND (from): Paul Collingwood (captain), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Stuart Broad, Alastair Cook, Dimitri Mascarenhas, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Matt Prior, Owais Shah, Ryan Sidebottom, Jonathon Trott, Michael Yardy.

WEST INDIES (from): Chris Gayle (captain), Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Dwayne Bravo, Fidel Edwards, Runako Morton, Daren Powell, Denesh Ramdin, Ravi Rampaul, Austin Richards Jr, Darren Sammy, Marlon Samuels, Lendl Simmons, Devon Smith, Dwayne Smith.



PHOTO: AFP

Injured Brazilian striker Fred (C) is being helped by a team staff and security guard to leave a hotel in Puerto La Cruz on Friday.