

Vaas cleared for Lord's stint

AFP, Colombo
Veteran Sri Lankan seamer Chaminda Vaas will miss next week's third Test against Bangladesh in Kandy to return to English county Middlesex, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said on Friday.

"We will be without Vaasy for the final Test," SLC spokesman Samantha Algama told AFP. "He is going to back to England."

Vaas, 33, who had joined Middlesex at the start of the English season, returned home to play against Bangladesh and scored a maiden Test century in the first Test.

But with Sri Lanka having taken a decisive 2-0 lead in the three-match series, Vaas was given permission to honour the rest of his contract with Middlesex.

Sri Lanka won both matches by innings margins and look set for a clean sweep when the final Test starts at the Asgiriya stadium in Kandy on Wednesday.

All-rounder Farveez Maharoof, left-arm spinner Sujeeva de Silva and leg-spinner Malinga Bandara are standing by to replace Vaas, who has claimed 319 wickets in 98 Tests.

Barring injuries, Vaas will play his 100th Test against world champions Australia in Hobart in November. Off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, who is contracted with Lancashire, will also return to England after the Kandy Test. Both Vaas and he will miss the upcoming three one-dayers against Bangladesh.

Aus tri-series unlikely next year

PTI, Melbourne
The annual one-day tri-series in Australia is in doubt next year and it is likely that South Africa and New Zealand could play separate rubbers against the world champions.

While India and Sri Lanka have agreed to play the traditional limited-overs tournament this summer, negotiations are continuing with New Zealand and South Africa for 2008-09, local media reported on Friday.

As of now, New Zealand and South Africa are pencilled in for five one-day matches each against the Aussies in two separate series and it would be the first time since the World Series Cricket settlement in 1979-80 that a triangular one-day series is not played in Australia.

"There's a hurdle in 2008-09. We need to work with both New Zealand and South Africa to determine what the programme looks like," Cricket Australia's Operations Manager Michael Brown said. "At this stage we have them committed for five one-day games each," he told 'The Australian'.

Thorpe gets NSW job

BBC ONLINE, undated
Former Surrey and England batsman Graham Thorpe has been appointed assistant coach of New South Wales for the 2007-08 Australian season.

The state side have revamped their coaching team after Trevor Bayliss left to become Sri Lanka's new coach.

Thorpe will work alongside new head coach Matthew Mott in Sydney.

"This represents the next chapter of my cricket career and I intend to give it my all," said Thorpe, who won 100 Test caps before retiring in 2005.

"I'm absolutely delighted to be offered the position and very much look forward to the challenge."

The 37-year-old has worked with the New South Wales squad for the past two winters as a specialist batting coach and NSW chief executive Dave Gilbert described his promotion as an "exciting" opportunity.

He added: "To have a player of Graham's international experience working with our squad, particularly our young talented players, will be tremendous."

Thorpe made his Test debut against Australia in 1993, marking the occasion with a century at Trent Bridge, and went on to score 6,744 runs at an average of 44.66.

Nayeem shows

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sponsorship. It has yet to happen here," he observed.

Nayeemuddin, however, was not worried the way Bangladesh's last foreign coach - Argentina's Diego Cruciani - had been treated and sent back without his last month's salary.

"I have a goal and would want to reach there with sincere works. These things will not cloud my thoughts," added Nayeemuddin, whose boys are now fifth in the ongoing B. League table.



PHOTO: STAR

Golam Mostofa (R) of BKSP leads the pack as he wins the under-18 200m sprint in the 23rd National Youth Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Rain or Shiv?



BBC ONLINE, undated

It is hard to know which sight English sports fans are more sick of - the rain hammering down at Wimbledon or Shivanine Chanderpaul batting for the West Indies.

Both have been equally prominent this summer, but while it's been nice weather for ducks at SW19, they are the last things you would associate with the obdurate left-hander.

He scored 446 runs at 148.66 in the Test series and has carried on in the same vein in the one-dayers with 169 runs, without being dismissed, in the two matches so far.

The 32-year-old is expected to shake off an ankle injury in time to take part in the NatWest Series decider at Trent Bridge on Saturday, so just how do England go about getting him out?

"What you must do with a batsman like that is to bowl straight - you must have control of your direction - off stump, off stump, off stump," former West Indies pace great Colin Croft told BBC Sport.

"He doesn't play that much outside of the off stump so you bowl at the off stump - you vary your length a little bit and hope he loses concentration."

"You bowl at what he might consider his strengths, and that's the off stump. He doesn't hook, he doesn't pull, so you've got to bowl where he thinks he's strong and try to get him out."

"With the form he's been in it will be difficult but you've got to keep going."

At one point during the Test series the Guyanese left-hander went over 1,000 minutes without losing his wicket.

It is the third time he has achieved the feat while no-one else in the history of the game has managed it more than once, so he clearly has an unflappable temperament.

"Alan Border, Geoffrey Boycott and Sunil Gavaskar had the same kind of concentration," said Croft.

"To be consistent like that has to make him special and in today's environment he's unique because the rest of them don't seem to think batsmanship should last more than 30 overs."

Chanderpaul has moved seamlessly from the Test to the one-day arena and England's attack look just as impotent against him with the white ball as they were with the red.

"I don't know if it's a lack of control, but for any batsman who makes runs you must have a plan and I don't know if they have a plan," said Croft.

"The truth is I don't think the English bowlers are that good - I think they are very ordinary."

"What's special about England's bowling outside of Monty Panesar?"

Chanderpaul may not be the most elegant batsman to grace the game - his crab-like stance is not one for the stylist - but he averages 46.63 after 104 Tests and 39.00 from 219 ODIs.

Those are serious figures and Croft has no doubt about just how important the left-hander is to the Windies.

"Chanderpaul has been the most consistent West Indies cricketer for the last 15 years, including Brian Lara," said Croft.

"He has very seldom failed for the West Indies on any tour he's been on, despite a few illness and injuries."

"A lot of people don't want to hear that because he doesn't look like Lara, he's not outgoing, he's not flashy."

"Nobody acknowledges it because he doesn't look fancy on television, but the purpose of batsmanship is to get runs."

Chanderpaul's scoring has been just as heavy and persistent as the rain this summer. For West Indies to emerge from their slump in the post-Lara era, however, he's going to have to keep on doing it for several to come.

'ICL to be a cricket lab'



CRICINFO, undated

Subhash Chandra, the head of the Essel Group, intends to make India "the laboratory to innovate new methods of cricket" through the Indian Cricket League (ICL), a report in Khaleej Times said.

"The idea is also to develop India, a leading cricketing nation, as the laboratory to innovate new models of cricket so that we set the agenda for innovation for others to follow," Chandra wrote in a three-page letter faxed to Sharad Pawar, the BCCI president, on April 3, the day he announced the formation of the ICL.

The ICL, Chandra said, would take a "meticulous and out-of-the-box approach to the game to raise its standards, which involves creation of international standard infrastructure". It will tap talent "with the aid of modern technological and communication tools" and provide them

financial assistance. The ICL, which has signed up Kapil Dev, Kiran More, Sandeep Patil, Tony Greig and Dean Jones in various capacities, will have matches of 20 overs a side. Each side will have two top Indian and four foreign players.

The prize money for the tournament, which will be telecast on Zee Sports, includes \$1 million for the winners.

While conceding that the national board "is the only way to make cricket competition between national teams work", Chandra said the history of modern cricket shows that innovation has largely taken place outside the establishment. "In my understanding, their constraints rob the cricket establishments of the flexibility needed to adopt a new vision-cum-action model like the 3-D approach."

The BCCI, in its response to the ICL's proposal, has ruled out any cooperation and has revoked the pensions of players who have joined the ICL.

I'm unsure of playing

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also the local media. Former Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar is highly impressed by Rahim's batting and said that the innings showed that one should score runs to survive at this level.

"He played a very controlled innings. It was a brilliant knock but what impressed me most was the way he coped with pressure. His career is all about pressure because he always has to fight with someone like Khaled Mashud for his place as a wicketkeeper. He showed that scoring runs is also important to settle in the middle," said Bashar yesterday at the team hotel.

The 34-year-old Bashar is under tremendous pressure as he came here with a mission to rediscover his long lost form but has so far scored only 36 runs (2, 17, 5, 12) in four innings which is not only one of the main reasons behind the team's batting blues but something that has also jeopardised his career.

The most successful Test batsman of the country was also in a dilemma with the new attitude of the team. "Yes, I tried to change my natural game which meant that I avoided

my favourite pull and hook shots in the initial stages. Unfortunately, it hasn't worked. I have gone through such a long bad patch in my career. I am confused whether to play my natural game or not because I have been successful with my natural batting," said Bashar, who has three hundreds and 22 half-centuries under his belt.

"Everybody should occupy the crease but scoring runs is also important. I think I have to punish the bad balls. Actually I tried to change my batting because the Sri Lankans know my style. I have to bat more like Mushfiqur and Ashrafu," he explained.

"I believe that everything will be okay once I get a big score. I have started confidently in every innings but suddenly got out. I am not worried about my future but it's a bad feeling not to contribute for the team."

Ashrafu and Mushfiqur have already shown the way and now it is a challenge for the other top-order batsmen to follow their footsteps to avoid further embarrassment in the third and final Test, which starts at the picturesque hill-station of Kandy from July 11.

Le Roux resigns

CRICINFO, undated

Adrian Le Roux has resigned as South Africa's fitness trainer. He has been with the Proteas for just over four years and before that he was involved with Free State cricket and the Indian national cricket team.

He will be returning to Bloemfontein where he will take up a position with a medical company, SA Biomedical. But he will act as a consultant for Cricket South Africa (CSA) from time to time, including the appointment of the new Proteas fitness trainer and in CSA's high performance programme.

He said: "A number of factors lead to my resignation. I've been touring with professional teams extensively over the last six years. This obviously affects your family life and it is now time to move closer to home and take on some new challenges."

"The last six to 12 months have made me take the final decision having contemplated this step in my life over this period of time."

"A big thanks must also go to the players I have worked with during my tenure, they always kept things interesting. It has also been a pleasure and a privilege working at the highest level of the sport. To the coaches and members of the support staff, I'd like to thank you too. It has been a great experience."

Gerald Majola, the board's chief executive, said: "Adrian's resignation is a big loss to the Proteas set-up as he is one of the best fitness trainers in world cricket. We are most grateful for his input over the past four years, and respect his decision to move into a new field close to his home base."

Lara, Donald

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Dermot Reeve, in a Warwickshire Greatest Ever XI against a PCA Masters XI at Edgbaston on 31 August.

"Playing at Edgbaston again is going to be a very special day - especially with all the guys that are making themselves available," said Donald.

"It will be quite something and will bring back memories of some of my greatest ever years with the club."

I had a wonderful time at Warwickshire and I'm really looking forward to renewing some old rivalries and friendships. To play in front of the Edgbaston crowd once more will be a real honour," added Donald.

Stanford to pay \$20m dollars

CRICINFO, undated

Allen Stanford has expanded his 2020 Super Stars concept with US\$20 million up for grabs for the winning team. The announcement came with the news that two new sides, Cuba and Turks and Caicos, would join the existing 19 teams for the month-long Stanford 20/20 tournament to be held in January 2008.

The Super Stars competition is scheduled for June 2008 and will feature a team made up of the best players from next year's January-February tournament. Stanford plans to invite four ICC teams to Antigua to play each other in a single elimination knockout system, with the winning team to take on the Super Stars for the US\$20 million jackpot. A one-off match between the Super Stars and South Africa was slated for last November, with a US\$5 million prize, but did not take place.

After the success of last year's Stanford 20/20, the Super Stars will next season be able to select players from 21 teams. As with the existing sides, Turks and Caicos will receive US\$100,000 in capital investment funding and US\$180,000 to spend on the development of players and coaches, and the maintenance of facilities and equipment. Stanford said international policies meant the same funding could not be given to Cuba, but the Stanford 20/20 board would offer support in other ways.

Development funding will also be provided for Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. They are expected to field teams in the 2009 tournament. Next year's competition will be the first to feature the Antigua and Barbuda professional team that Stanford put together, in what will be an interesting test case for Stanford's idea of a professional league in the Caribbean.

"I'm committed to (the two tournaments) and will be investing a further US\$100 million over the next three years and at some point I expect to make a profit, something that needs to happen for the longevity of the programme and will provide essential funding for West Indies cricket," Stanford said. "I have committed my resources and I believe that within the next three years we will have a world-beating West Indies team again."

Malik rues missed match

PTI, Karachi

The washout of the one-day international against arch-rivals India in Glasgow had deprived Pakistan of a chance to boost morale and confidence, captain Shoaib Malik has said.

"In Pakistan, a match against India is above everything else and the players were also looking forward to it although it was for a charitable cause. If we had performed well, it would have been good for our morale and boosted the confidence of the people in us," Malik said on his return from Glasgow on Thursday.

The charity one-day, organised in aid of Prince Charles' Foundation, was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to persistent rain and a soggy outfield.

The Pakistan team did not get to play against hosts Scotland either as that match was also washed out due to inclement weather. They also did not get a chance to have any outdoor practice.

"It was very frustrating but there was nothing we could do. I was very keen for the match against India because Shoaib Akhtar was making a comeback after a while and was fired up for the game," he said.

But the players of the two sub-continent teams took the opportunity to interact with each other and exchange notes.

"Some of our players get along well with some of their players. But on the field there is no love lost between us," Malik said.

Nadal, Federer

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on Berdych's serve at 5-1 in the third set, but the Czech erased it with an ace. Nadal wasted another in the next game, but won when Berdych sent a forehand into the net.

"I had to concentrate with the movement because the ball was very difficult to touch," Nadal said. "Today was very tough with the wind, but anyway I played very good."

The second-seeded Spaniard was stretched to five sets in the previous two rounds, with the former being played over a span of three days at the All England Club. If he wins Saturday's semifinal against Novak Djokovic, who overcame the challenge of Marcos Baghdatis in a five-set thriller, then Sunday's final would mark Nadal's seventh consecutive day on court.

"Two very, very tough games, tough matches against (Robin Soderling and (Mikhail) Youzhny," Nadal said. "The most important thing is the victory."

'KP will come good'



AFP, Birmingham

Kevin Pietersen may be undergoing something of a slump by his own standards but Matt Prior has said it will be no surprise to his England teammates if he plays a match-winning innings in Saturday's final one-day international against the West Indies at Trent Bridge.

Pietersen, the leading batsman in the International Cricket Council (ICC) rankings for one-day cricket, has scored just 77 runs in four limited overs internationals this season.

But with the three-match series level at 1-1, after West Indies' 61-run win at Edgbaston here Wednesday, Prior is expecting great things of his fellow South Africa-born cricketer.

"He is a fantastic cricketer, a champion legend who will become a legend of the game," England wicketkeeper Prior said Thursday.

"When he doesn't score runs for a couple of games, people start talking about a crisis."

"He's hitting the ball brilliantly in the nets and I'm sure he'll score a brilliant hundred very soon - and it

might even be on Saturday."

However, even if Pietersen does come good that may not be enough for England if they cannot dismiss Shivanine Chanderpaul cheaply, provided he takes the field after suffering a right ankle ligament injury.

The 32-year-old left-hander averaged over 148 in a four-match Test series the West Indies lost 3-0, batting for more than 24 hours.

And he provided fresh evidence of his ability to attack, as well as defend, with 116 not out in Wednesday's victory.

"I've spent most of the summer looking at the back of his bat," Prior said. "He's a fantastic player and he's showed that time and again in the past few weeks. You must take your hat off to him."

"His concentration seems unbreakable and he's just so stubborn."

"He wants to bat and bat, he never gets bored with batting and scoring runs," Prior added.

"He's having one of those purple patches that the top players go through. "He's very experienced and I don't think any vocals from me from behind the stumps are going to affect him," said Prior, not shy of making the odd comment.

"All we can do is to continue

working on our plans and hope we get him out early on Saturday."

Prior, used as an opener in one-day cricket, scored his maiden limited overs international fifty on Wednesday.

Rapid run-scoring at the top of the innings proved a problem for England at the World Cup where Prior, 25, failed to make the squad.

But the overcast, seam-bowler friendly, conditions in which this current series has been played have made ball-striking early on difficult.

"It's a difficult balance," Prior said. "I'm always looking to be aggressive but you must be careful, especially in English conditions when the ball moves around a fair bit early on."

"If the ball is seaming, nobody in the world can score at seven, eight, nine-an-over without taking risks. So you must weigh up the situation."

"Some days, it is more important to keep wickets in hand. The West Indies showed that yesterday (Wednesday) - they kept wickets in hand and that made the final 10 overs much easier. They could really attack us."

"Other times, though, you can really try to hit the ball and attack the bowling. It's a case of thinking on your feet - all the best one-day cricketers think on their feet."

Akhtar glad its over



AFP, London

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar believes the "darkest times" of his life have come to an end following the decision to dismiss an appeal against the overturning of a doping ban.

Akhtar, 31, and new-ball partner Mohammad Asif tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone in tests conducted by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in October last year. They were banned for two years and one year respectively in November.

However, a month later, both were controversially reinstated by a Pakistani appeals committee, prompting the World Anti-Doping Agency to go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

But, on Monday, CAS, based in Lausanne, Switzerland, ruled it did

not have the jurisdiction to deal with the matter and that the PCB does not provide a right of appeal to the international sports court.

Akhtar said he was glad a difficult period in his life was now finished. "I've had lots of controversies, mental problems, health problems, injuries - yeah I'm glad to be over them now. I've fixed myself once again," Akhtar told the Bigstarcric.com website on Thursday.

"The Court's decision was a relief. Those times when I was banned were the darkest of my life, as I was in such agony and pain and mental stress," added Akhtar, nicknamed the 'Rawalpindi Express'.

"But I have never taken illegal substances, I never did anything wrong."

Akhtar and Asif were omitted from the Pakistan squad that suffered a first-round exit at the World Cup, where coach Bob Woolmer

was declared dead 24 hours after the team's shock defeat against Ireland in Jamaica on March 17.

"The way the doping case was handled was stupid and pathetically wrong," said Akhtar. "They (the PCB) could have saved their country's respect and a big disaster because the two of us lost our fitness and never ended up going to the World Cup."

He added: "The last four years for Pakistan cricket have been ballistic with The Oval fiasco (where Pakistan forfeited a Test against England in 2006 after being charged with ball-tampering), my doping fiasco, it was too much for Pakistan cricket to handle."

"Now the Pakistan team is recovering and we would like to do well once again."

In his 43 Tests Akhtar, who made his debut in 1997, has taken 169 wickets at an average of 25.30 apiece.

Anderson fined for clash



AFP, Birmingham

England fast bowler James Anderson has been fined 50 per cent of his match fee after clashing with West Indies batsman Runako Morton.

Anderson, 24, shoulder-barged Morton at the end of an over during the West Indies' victory in the second one-day international at Edgbaston on Wednesday.

Morton reacted angrily to the shove and words were exchanged, with umpire Brian Jerling have to step in.

There was further tension between the players when Anderson pointedly gestured towards Morton after his dismissal in a match West Indies won by 61 runs to level the series at 1-1.

Both men were called to see match referee Mike Procter after the match but while Anderson was fined, Morton was found not guilty of breaching the International Cricket Council (ICC) code of conduct.

The warring pair will have a

chance to go head to head again in the third and final one-day match at Trent Bridge on Saturday.

Procter, explaining his decision, said Thursday in an ICC statement: "I have no problem with players being aggressive on the field because our game is all about passion and commitment."

"But, at the same time, they have to recognize they are role models watched by people all over the world," the former South Africa all-rounder added.

"Cricket is, after all, a non-contact sport and when players fail to recognize that fact and engage in needless nudges, the type of which we saw yesterday (Wednesday), then that is where we have to draw the line."

"James Anderson is not a player with a reputation for bad behaviour and, as he reflects on what happened yesterday and the fine he has incurred, I am sure he will do everything he can to ensure there is no repeat of this unfortunate incident."

"I concluded that Runako Morton was the victim of James Anderson's aggression rather than guilty of bad

behaviour."

To complete a bad day for England, Anderson's teammate Stuart Broad was reprimanded for wearing white 'skins' under his coloured one-day uniform, something which is banned under an ICC protocol.

"As for Stuart Broad's offence, the regulations regarding clothing are there in black and white and teams are reminded about them on a regular basis," Procter said.

"The potential for problems with players, especially bowlers, wearing visible white garments in a match involving a white ball is obvious and hopefully this sanction against Stuart will serve as a reminder to him not to wear such garments in the future."

Anderson does have the right of appeal against his level two offence. Such an appeal must be lodged in writing with the ICC's legal counsel within 24 hours of the decision being handed down.

But for Broad's infringement of the rules, a level one breach of the code, the match referee's decision is final and binding.

Youngsters demand places



CRICINFO, undated

Munaf Patel is determined to regain his firepower in order to book a berth in the Indian team for the upcoming limited overs series in England. Munaf, undergoing rehabilitation and training at the MRF Pace Foundation, said that he was progressing gradually to regain his rhythm and fitness and was close to bowling with his usual venom.

"Currently I am using 85 per cent of my run-up. Hopefully I will be able to use my full run-up soon," he said.

Indian team physio John Gloster is advising Patel on his current rehabilitation schedule. Munaf said his prime target was to become fully fit. "After the back muscle spasm problem in the Bangladesh tour, I am concentrating on regaining full fitness. Had it been some other injury, it would have taken a longer time to cure."

Patel, who has taken 26 wickets from 22 ODIs, was not unduly perturbed about the new pacers competing for berths in the national

team. "The competition is always there. There will be pressure also. Whoever performs well under tough conditions will surely get picked for India."

"I am not looking at the past. I am positive about my future. I am working hard to achieve my target. I will be able to bowl with the same pace as before," he said.

Javagal Srinath, the former Indian fast bowler, felt that Munaf looked promising during the sessions at the pace academy. "It's been pretty good," Srinath told ANI. He has been open, open for