

Whatmore can't wait

CRICINFO, Mumbai

Dav Whatmore, the former Australian batsman who has tasted success coaching subcontinent teams, can't wait to start his latest assignment with the National Cricket Academy in India (NCA).

Whatmore recently accepted an offer from the Board of Control for Cricket in India to serve as the director of operations in the NCA. Eager to get on with the job, Whatmore, who arrived in Mumbai Saturday evening, is set to visit the Bangalore-based NCA sometime this week.

Though Whatmore is yet to sign his contract, which runs for three years, he reckons it's "just a formality and should be done shortly".

"I've arrived here for good now and want to start as soon as I can," Whatmore told Cricinfo at the Cricket Club of India. He is being accompanied by his wife Catherine, who will be in the country for a few days before she heads back to Australia.

Rajshahi

FROM PAGE 17

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHITTAGONG: 176 all out and 317 all out. BARISAL: 274 all out and 220-5 in 75.5 overs (Nafees 1, Hannan 49, Imran 19, Roquibul 55, Raisul 54 not out, Arafat 0, Nasiruddin Faruque 10 not out; Tareq 1-63, Ashiqur 1-37, Saju 3-61)

Result: Barisal won by five wickets.

SYLHET: 141 all out and 258 all out in 112.1 overs (Imtiaz 23, Rahman 15, Mabud 12, Rajin 68, Kapali 35, Rahim 27, Rezaul 18, Tapash 9, Enamul 1, Nazmul 14, Nabil 19 not out; Shahjahan 3-70, Forhad 1-17, Delwar 1-35, Shuvo 4-93)

RAJSHAHI: 301 all out and 99-2 in 28 overs (Jahirul 39 not out; Zunaed 2, Forhad 27, Naeem 23 not out; Tapash 1-11, Enamul 1-23)

Result: Rajshahi won by eight wickets.

UEFA slash

FROM PAGE 20

The incident came after Celtic had scored what proved to be the winning goal in the October 3 fixture.

Dida, 34, was tapped by the fan who had invaded the playing area but then slumped to the ground dramatically and was substituted by Milan.

He was charged under UEFA regulations which stipulate "member associations, clubs, as well as their players, officials and members, shall conduct themselves according to the principles of loyalty, integrity and sportsmanship".

Celtic were fined 25,000 pounds for the misbehaviour by the fan, who was subsequently banned for life by the club.

Milan face Group D leaders Shakhtar on Wednesday, having taken three points from their opening two Champions League games.

Atletico rip

FROM PAGE 20

Laudrup, now travel to London on Thursday, with renewed confidence and hope to spring a surprise result in the capital.

Laudrup revealed that he may rest some players for the Tottenham match with the league their top priority.

"The league has the priority at the moment," said Laudrup. "We have to think of the next league match against Santander on Sunday and then against Bilbao."

Elsewhere last season's second division champions Valladolid continue to struggle in the top-flight, crashing to a 2-1 loss against Athletic Bilbao.

Artiz Aduriz scored twice for Bilbao after eight and 31 minutes to leave Valladolid second from bottom with promoted Levante, who have a meagre one point, propping up the table.

Hamilton keeps

FROM PAGE 20

great. We've just had one of the most fantastic Formula One seasons ever. If somebody told a year ago we'd be fighting for the world championship at this stage, I'd have replied they are dreaming.

"But it's been a fantastic year. We lost it by one point - we'll come back next year and if we don't win it next year, we'll win it the year after. But one thing's for sure: Lewis Hamilton is here to stay."

"We're going to come back next year; the team is going to come back strong. Hopefully all the rubbish that's gone through in Formula One this year will not be there next year, and I think we're going to be a force to be reckoned with again."

McLaren team boss Ron Dennis said: "Having fought a close and thrilling battle in the drivers' championship all year and then not to win it at the final hurdle is obviously extremely disappointing."

"However, we as a team can only feel very proud of all our achievements this season and the way in which we have conducted ourselves."

"To come into this championship show down with two drivers both with a chance of winning is a testament to all the hard work and dedication everybody in the team has put in throughout this difficult year."



PHOTO: AFP

Australia captain Ricky Ponting speaks at a press conference at the Sydney International Airport yesterday following his return from the one-day series in India.

'Don't react in race row'

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia cricket captain Ricky Ponting Monday returned home from a tour of India marred by racial abuse with a warning to home fans not to retaliate when India visit in November.

Ponting said while some Indian players would likely be given a "hard time" by fans when they play down under, he hopes this would not include racial taunts such as those endured by Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds.

"I imagine they would be, I should be. I would be, in Australia," he said.

Australian cricket crowds do not have a lily-white reputation, with racial slurs and chants directed at some of the South African team in previous years.

The Australian skipper singled out paceman Shanthakumar Sreesanth, who has been involved in on-field verbal clashes with Symonds, as one likely target.

"I'm sure that at different times Sreesanth and a few of the guys will cop a hard time from the Australian fans," Ponting told reporters in Sydney.

"That will generally happen at some stage to most teams that tour here, but I just hope -- I'll keep my fingers crossed -- there's no racial stuff (that) comes up at all through the summer."

Australia and India play four Tests and one Twenty20 game during the summer tour which begins in December in Melbourne.

Both will also take part in a triangular one-day series with Sri Lanka and there are fears that champion spin bowler Muttiah Muralidaran could be baited by crowds as he seeks to break Australian Shane Warne's

wicket-taking record.

Muralidaran has endured a turbulent relationship with Australian crowds since he was no-balled for throwing in Melbourne in 1995 and refused to tour in 2004.

He now needs just nine wickets to break the recently retired Warne's record.

But Warne said Muralidaran, who was welcomed as a champion when he returned to play in Australia in a tsunami appeal match in 2005, would be well received.

"Australian crowds are pretty good, I remember Jacques Kallis scored 100 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the crowd stood up and clapped him," Warne told reporters.

"There's a lot of good sportsmanship with the Australian public."

Warne also backed his long-time under-study, Stuart MacGill, for inclusion in the Test team as selectors prepare to name the players for the first Test against Sri Lanka starting on November 8.

"He's been around for a long time and deserves his chance," Warne said.

Australia's pace-line-up is also not seen up, with Ponting backing Mitchell Johnson after his performance in India where he topped the averages with 14 wickets at 19.57.

"He's done everything right as far as putting his name up in front of the selectors," Ponting said. "It's going to be an interesting selection."

Strauss to take a break

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Andrew Strauss says he has been "hurt" by his omission from the England squad and plans to take a break from cricket.

He will then decide if he should join the 'Performance Squad' that will travel to India this winter.

"The 30-year-old was left out of the Test squad to tour Sri Lanka, despite having been awarded a year-long central contract only last month.

Strauss captained England as recently as 2006 against Pakistan but has been dropped after averaging just 27 in Tests over the last year.

"To say that it hurts is a massive understatement," he said.

"In truth it is the culmination of a long, tiring and immensely frustrating 12 months in which little has gone my way."

"But I still have to take responsibility for my less than satisfactory contributions."

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Rangers eye Barca scalp

FROM PAGE 20

Rangers and Scotland veteran centre-half David Weir admits his team's recent success could make things even harder for the Ibrox side on Wednesday.

The 37-year-old said: "Barcelona have some of the world's most gifted players and it's going to be a magnificent occasion for everyone to be involved in at Ibrox."

"But our two wins will mean they will not take us lightly. In fact, the way Scottish football has been going at the moment I don't think anyone would underestimate our team just now."

However, Barcelona's French defender Lilian Thuram believes his team's recent defeat, and Scotland's improving form, will not affect the outcome of this week's game and also the return on November 7.

He said: "The way we are now playing with style and scoring great goals, provokes fear in our opponents."

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Afzali wants to open

AFP, Faisalabad

Pakistan's flamboyant all-rounder Shahid Afridi said he is keen to take on his old role of opening the innings in the one-day series against South Africa.

Afzali has been sent into bat lower down the order for the last few months and opened only once against Bangladesh in the World Twenty20 Championship last month, scoring 30 odd runs.

"I have told my captain and coach that I am willing to open the innings if the team wants it. But if they feel the team requirement is I bat lower down the order I have no problems with that as well," he said.

Afzali said he was keen to open again because of the problem Pakistan was facing at this position for sometime now.

"I feel comfortable batting as an opener because it gives me the freedom of playing with the field restrictions," he said.

Afzali said he was looking forward to the Indian tour and would be available for Tests and one-dayers.

The all-rounder had skipped the Tests against South Africa saying he wanted to take a break from the game to attend to some personal and family commitments.

"The break was necessary but now I am feeling good and the Indian tour would be a big challenge for me and the team," Afridi said.

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