

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, Ashique 1-37, Sajid 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; Shahjada 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, Naem 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 showdown 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."



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'

CRICINFO, 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 December.

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

Symonds, the only black player on the team, was subjected to monkey gestures during the last game of a seven-match one-day series in Mumbai last Wednesday after earlier receiving similar abuse during the fourth game at Vadodra.

Ponting, whose team won the Indian one-day series 4-2 before losing a one-off Twenty20 match, urged Australian fans to treat the subcontinental team as they would any other touring side.

"I don't think they should be treated any differently because of what's happened over there," he said.

"As far as I'm concerned, this whole racism stuff is completely unacceptable in any walk of life, let alone on a sporting field."

Ponting said nobody from the Indian team had spoken to him about the taunts, adding that they should be embarrassed by the crowd's attitude towards Symonds.

"I imagine they would be. They 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 Shanthakumaran 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 understudy, 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 sewn up, with Ponting backing Mitchell Johnson after his performance in India where he topped the averages with 14 wickets at 18.57.

"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

CRICINFO, undated

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

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."

"I have been a victim of some poor umpiring decisions, some unfortunate dismissals and a few incredibly good balls delivered at just the wrong moment."

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

England seamer Steve Harmison will head to South Africa next month to boost his fitness and form and Australian club cricket could have been another option for Strauss, but instead he is planning to take a break from cricket.

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

"Some further time away from the game, regaining hunger and desire, may be beneficial," he told the Sunday Telegraph.

"But over the longer term the only way I can rediscover the habit of scoring runs is by playing, so I will have to look into the opportunities available."

In the 19 months since March 2006, Strauss has played in all 31 of England's Test matches on tour in India and Australia and at home to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, West Indies and India.

He has also appeared in 34 of the 39 one-day internationals England have played in that time -- he was dropped for the first few games of the World Cup.

Strauss described the programme as a "ridiculously crowded international schedule".

He added: "Without any sort of window in the last 18 months to take stock, make technical changes and refresh the mind, turning it around has been extremely difficult."

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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 teams just now."

Rangers have injury worries over French-Algerian Ibrahim Hemdani, struggling with a groin problem, and French forward Jean-Claude Dacheville, a hamstring injury, but captain Barry Ferguson will be fit despite suffering from a thigh strain.

While Rangers enjoyed the perfect preparation for Wednesday's game with a comprehensive 3-0 victory at home to fierce rivals Celtic on Saturday, Barcelona lost 3-1 away to Villarreal.

And, in addition to Frank Rijkaard's side losing their first game of the season, they also lost Portuguese playmaker Deco, after he suffered a groin injury which will rule him out for this week's game and also the return on November 7.

However, Barcelona's French defender Lilian Thuram believes his team's recent defeat, and Scotland's improving form, will not affect the outcome of the Champions League match.

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

"Scottish football has improved recently and we know it won't be easy, but we are better than Rangers and need to play our own style and not let them dictate the game."

cult.

"It isn't that I have been completely out of form but rather that I have been caught in a limbo, where every decent innings seemed to be followed by a low score."

"Without nailing a couple of really substantial contributions to silence the doubters, the pressure has grown."

Biggies aim

FROM PAGE 20
the back of a disappointing 3-1 defeat to Villarreal while Rangers dominated their big rivals Celtic 3-0 on Saturday.

Barcelona leftback Eric Abidal knows his team are in for a battle.

"I've played against Scotland with France and we lost twice. Their football is very aggressive and very physical," he said.

"Barca has to develop its play and not fall into playing their style of game, based on the counter-attack and physical battles."

In other games Serie A leaders and champions Inter Milan travel to CSKA Moscow in group G.

Substitution

FROM PAGE 20
me played a crucial role in us getting the winning goal.

"I was hurt and disappointed at being taken off because, like I said, I'm a local lad and the derby means everything to me."

The Liverpool skipper will ask Benitez to explain his decision, but isn't getting too worked up about it.

"I'll be speaking to the manager about it just to find out why I was substituted, but I won't be banging on his door or anything like that."

"We'll just have a chat and whatever is said will remain between us. But I've been in the game long enough to know that no-one is going to play every minute of every game and there will be times when I'm taken off like everyone else."

Gerrard went on to admit that he has been in poor form in recent weeks, but promised to work his way back with the help of the club's fans.

He added: "I know I haven't been at my best lately but I'm doing everything I can to get back there and having that kind of backing really does make a difference."

"I'm working back towards my best and knowing the fans are behind me will definitely help me get there much quicker."

Afridi 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.

Afridi 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.

Afridi 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.

Afridi 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 now is the senior most player in the side after the retirement of Inzamam-ul-Haq as he made his debut in 1996-97 ahead of Mohammad Yousuf and Shoaib Akhtar.

"Being a senior player is good and I like the responsibility. It has improved and helped me as a bowler as well," he stated.

AFP, Madrid

Former number three David Nalbandian turned the tables on Roger Federer to stun the Swiss 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 and win his first title in nearly 18 months with victory on Sunday at the Madrid Masters.

The Argentine, who stands 25th after going it alone a year before taking on Hernan Gumsy as his coach over the summer, becomes only the third man in 14 years to beat the numbers one, two and three at the same event.

The coach also paid for his decision to leave Brazilian playmaker Kaka out of the weekend match squad, saving him for the Champions League clash with Shakhtar Donetsk in midweek.

"Kaka is important for a team like ours, but it is beyond doubt we need to do better than this when he's not in the side. This cannot be the Milan performance without Kaka," added Ancelotti.

In other games, Lazio remain perilously close to the relegation zone despite a 1-0 win at rock-bottom Livorno while Sampdoria won 3-0 against third-bottom Parma, whose coach Domenico Di Carlo is facing the sack.

The other three games ended in draws, 1-1 between Udinese and Palermo and Cagliari and Catania and 2-2 between Atalanta and Torino.

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Kimi conjures

FROM PAGE 20
drama when Kazuki Nakajima in his BMW came into the pits and crashed into his own team of mechanics, two of whom were sent flying and appeared to be slightly injured.

Hamilton, with great verve and concentration, was up to ninth by lap 33, just one place outside the points positions and chasing hard to haul in time on fellow-Briton David Coulthard who was running in eighth place.

By then, Poland's Robert Kubica had passed Alonso at the end of the straight and soon after this Hamilton pitted again for hard tyres from ninth after 36 laps.

In 36 degrees heat by lap 40, Hamilton had been lapped by the two leading Ferraris who were in stunning form and more than a minute ahead of Alonso who recovered third after the pit stops.

The Ferraris were in a world of their own, running just seven-tenths of a second apart as the mathematics and probabilities occupied all the spectators wondering about the outcome of the world title race.

After 47 laps, Hamilton was up to eighth but he needed to finish fifth if the positions remained unchanged ahead of him - a massively-demanding target.

When Ferrari pitted again, Massa came in first after 50 laps and Raikkonen stayed out three laps before pitting to push himself into a position where, when he rejoined, he was 1.9 seconds ahead of his teammate.

This put him in line to win and collect the title unless Alonso, who also pitted, could claw his way into one of the top two positions, which proved beyond the Spaniard.

Raikkonen, with the scent of glory in his nostrils, then pulled clear by three seconds from Massa, the Finn going on to claim a famous victory.

WI's no to local coaches!

CRICINFO, undated

MIKE KING

West Indies have a new coach, but will that translate into new ideas and a new attitude and resolve from the Caribbean cricketers?

John Dyson has landed the poison chalice of looking after the West Indies, ranked eighth in the world in both Tests and ODIs. In short, the West Indies are at an all-time low and, once more, an Aussie has been given the job of resurrecting the team.

Dyson has in some ways sneaked up on the job, as his name was never even mentioned in the short-list of candidates. Ottis Gibson and Dav Whatmore had topped the list or probables, but both took themselves out of the reckoning by opting for assignments, lesser in profile but lower in stress. Gibson has decided not to pass up the chance to be England's fast bowling coach and Whatmore has accepted an offer to head India's National Cricket Academy.

What is clear is that the cricket committee clearly does not have faith in a homegrown coach, as Dyson's selection is a rejection of former Test players David Williams, Phil Simmons and Eldine Baptiste.

Dyson was a tough cookie as a player and dogged enough to make a Test hundred at Sydney off an

attack comprising Holding, Clarke, Garner and Croft. However, it is on his ability to iron out technical flaws and turn around a feeling of hopelessness in a team that he will be judged over the next year or so.

A coach alone cannot lift the West Indies out of the doldrums. There has to be a tournament bridging the gap between the youth tournament and the first-class season, and most importantly, the creation of a professional league where some of the best players in the world will be contracted to play in the Caribbean.

It would be remiss of me if I did not say farewell to Stephen Alleyne, the imposing, self-assured cricket administrator whose dedication to the job of delivering the 2007 World Cup to world-class standards and his attention to detail earned him high respect in the region and beyond.

Stephen was a mirror-image of his father, Charles Alleyne. Both tall and upright in physique and integrity. He was a lifelong diplomat in approach -- a friend of all and an enemy of none. Today, the Empire Club, the insurance industry, and the rest of this country will head to the mecca at Kensington Oval to mourn one of the leading sons of the soil.

(West Indian cricket writer King wrote this article for the Daily Nation)

Vengsarkar impressed

CRICINFO, undated

Dilip Vengsarkar, India's chairman of selectors, has on Monday said he is pleased with the team's performance in the one-off Twenty20 game against Australia in Mumbai.

"We played excellent cricket against a formidable team like Australia," he told reporters. "The Aussies play cricket at a different level, but we showed on Saturday that we too can be dominant."

Vengsarkar rued the loss in the sixth one-day in Nagpur, where India lost their way chasing a huge target after getting off to a solid start, to hand the series to Australia.

"Had we won in Nagpur we could have very well drawn the series."

He was also impressed with Mahendra Singh Dhoni's captaincy skills and the way he maintained his composure under pressure. "He did a good job during the series. He is a good thinker and a calming effect on the side."

Vengsarkar felt the wins in the last two matches against Australia would lift the team's spirit. "It will stand us in good stead and our morale will be higher when we play Pakistan," he said. "Even when we go to Australia these wins will help because we have beaten them here. At least it will be at the back of our minds that this team (Australia) is beatable."

Nalbandian stuns Federer

CRICINFO, undated

AFP, Madrid

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