

Derbyshire's Mahela coup

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene will play English county cricket for Derbyshire next year, the county's official website said on Wednesday.

Jayawardene, 30, will turn out for the county from the end of April to mid-July before returning home for Sri Lanka's Test commitments, the website said.

"Signing such a world-class player and current international captain is a massive boost for the club ahead of the 2008 season," Derbyshire chairman Don Arnott said.

"I can't wait to see Mahela -- as well as the likes of Rikki Clarke, Nayan Doshi, John Sadler and Wavell Hinds -- in action in a Derbyshire shirt and I am sure the members and supporters share my excitement."

Jayawardene, who leads Sri Lanka in a two-Test series in Australia next month, was voted the International Cricket Council's captain of the year in 2006.

The 88-Test veteran has scored 6,630 runs at an average of 49.84 with 18 centuries, including a best of 374 against South Africa in Colombo last year.

He has also played 261 one-day internationals with 7,232 runs and led Sri Lanka to the World Cup final in the Caribbean earlier this year.

Derbyshire's head of cricket John Morris said he was delighted that Jayawardene had signed.

"I knew that he was the right player after I had spoken to him and I could tell that he has the desire to play county cricket and contribute both experience and flair to Derbyshire's batting line-up," said Morris.

Hayden opposes zero tolerance on drugs issue

CRICINFO, undated

Matthew Hayden has urged Cricket Australia not to adopt a zero-tolerance approach on drugs because he believes the issue needs flexibility. The board is set to announce a new policy and Hayden, who is strongly opposed to drugs in sport, would welcome a "two strikes" rule that would give players one chance at rehabilitation.

"I don't think you can have a zero-tolerance policy on drugs because it's not as black and white as that," Hayden told the Daily Telegraph. "For example, what sort of drugs? Shane Warne was hit with a drugs charge but was nothing more than a diuretic. Is that the same as Shoaib Akhtar getting caught out with steroids in his system?"

"There has to be flexibility. When drugs stuff goes public, like Shane went public, he is considered a drug cheat. It is a debate on a human life. I don't think zero tolerance is the way to go."

"The No. 1 aim is to eliminate drugs within any sporting code. As a part of that you have to look at the individual and help them become rehabilitated the most effective and the quickest possible way."

Martins staying

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"That is how much I enjoy playing for him. I don't think I'll be going anywhere while Sam is here."

"I'm scoring goals and I'm playing games, that's all you can ask for as a striker."

Martins, who joined Newcastle in August 2006, admits he did struggle to adjust to the English game.

He explained: "It wasn't that easy when I first came to Newcastle and it took me a few months to learn about the Premier League, about England and living in Newcastle."

"I had to adapt to the style of football and it took me some time, but I'm very happy here."

Injury crisis

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only one win in 10 games.

Dutch coach Martin Jol's will desperately be seeking a European win on Thursday to hang on as coach after a 3-1 loss at Newcastle on Monday night.

"I'm already used to it (pressure), even before the season started. The only thing that counts is results. We're still in a good position in the cups and hopefully, on Thursday (in the UEFA Cup) we can get a result," said the defiant Jol.

Messi glory

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occasions Papac was not busy snuffing out the danger from Messi.

Papac said: "I thought I was doing well to keep him quiet and then the next minute I have Carlos Puyol flying down the wing as well!"

"But it was a tremendous result for the team. We are really satisfied to have taken a point and now I believe we have a good chance to go through."



PHOTO: COURTESY
Members of the Bangladesh national golf team pose with the guests during a reception accorded by the Kurmitola Golf Club on Monday. The team participated in the 47th Pakistan National Amateur Championship in Lahore over October 18-21 and Shahid Khan of Bangladesh clinched the individual winner's trophy while his teammate Shakhat Hossain became runner-up.

Murali after 12 years

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralidaran arrived on Wednesday for his first full Australia Test tour in 12 years braced for a chilly reception from fans as he bids to break Shane Warne's wickets record.

Muralidaran, who has refused to tour Australia in the past because of crowds taunting his unusual bowling action, wants to show why he is one of the best bowlers in the world, skipper Mahela Jayawardene said.

"He hasn't played here for 10 years in a Test match and he's pretty geared up I think. He feels Australia is one of the places that he has to challenge himself," Jayawardene said.

"This is probably a place where he has to prove he's one of the top bowlers in the world, so I think he's looking forward to the challenge."

"Murali" needs just nine wickets to overtake Warne's 708 Test scalps in the Test matches in Brisbane and Hobart starting on November 8 and 16.

The Sri Lanka tour follows

Australia's return home after a bitter series against India marred by the racial taunting of the team's only black player, Andrew Symonds, who was subjected to monkey noises and gestures.

There are fears that Muralidaran could receive unsportsmanlike treatment in Australia, where he has been called for "throwing" on two previous tours and subjected to constant crowd calls of "no ball."

Sri Lanka coach Trevor Bayliss said there were "always idiots in every crowd" and it was near impossible to control the behaviour of fans.

"But when it gets a bit out of control like it did in the series just gone in India it becomes pretty disappointing and I think pretty embarrassing for the home team," he said.

"But I think the majority of people realise it's the wrong thing to do and don't get involved, there's just one or two idiots in every crowd."

Jayawardene said his team would challenge Australia but not get so carried away as to be involved in the antics seen in India.

"We have to be very aggressive with Australia, but to a certain extent sometimes if you go overboard you lose your own concentration as well, and we certainly

don't want that to happen," he told a press conference.

"We will be aggressive, but not to the extent that we would get involved with silly incidents."

Australia captain Ricky Ponting said a little heckling from the crowd was to be expected.

"But when it gets a bit out of control like it did in the series just gone in India it becomes pretty disappointing and I think pretty embarrassing for the home team," he said.

Muralidaran's ultra-flexible bowling action has come under its heaviest scrutiny in Australia, where he has been called for "throwing" on two previous tours and subjected to constant crowd calls of "no ball."

He boycotted Sri Lanka's 2004 visit after Australian Prime Minister John Howard labelled him a "chucker."

However, he returned for a one-off Test for the Rest of the World in 2005 and a one-day series in 2006, when he was unofficially reprimanded for making a one-fingered gesture to taunting spectators in Perth.

Sri Lanka will play a warm-up match in Adelaide starting Saturday.

Afrodi takes charge

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

On some days it just isn't worth your while running into Shahid Afridi. He'll hustle you when he bowls, he'll bully you when he bats and he'll jeer and taunt you when he fields. He'll pop up wherever and whenever the opposition don't want him to, eti-quette be damned.

South Africa huffed and puffed on Tuesday, as they have through the series, but they haven't been able to blow him away. A certain mood has gripped the Pathan and he's been fairly straining at an imaginary leash to have a go. In Lahore, he scared them with the bat first, then flummoxed them with his legspin; in Faisalabad he did both and in between added a stunning catch for good measure. The Man-of-the-Match award was a shoo-in.

He was nonchalant about it later, even arguing that Mohammad Yousuf's fine fifty deserved it. "I wasn't special. I need to keep performing in my bowling, batting and fielding so I can do a little bit in everything."

Modest it may be, but as a bowler it is difficult to recall him being a more difficult proposition to face, especially on surfaces such as this one, comprehending which was beyond the grasp of most. No runs are given easily and there's never enough time to settle, to gather thoughts about the opportunities to score that have just passed by. This is actually the most senior now in this ODI team, in terms of the years he has been playing international cricket.

Afrodi is aware of it too. His desire to captain Pakistan when Younis Khan turned it down was no secret and he even had some backing if only for the shorter game. He was eventually overlooked even for the vice-captaincy, and before scoffing at the thought of Afridi and a leadership role, note that the official vice-captain is currently 12th man. In any case, he's been easily Pakistan's most vibrant figure -- as he was through 2005 -- and a proxy leader of sorts.

It is difficult to reconcile to the idea that Afridi may eventually mature as man and player. If he does, it might actually be the undoing of him. But if this is his own way of responding to a position of quasi-responsibility, then all power to him.

He's also got more tricks than a truckload of monkeys; slow, quick, wrong'un, offbreak and if the pitch is giving it, then appreciable turn for the leggie. Little wonder he says it is his primary function, and any bowler who dismisses Jacques Kallis twice in successive innings has a right to say that.

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