

Lara loves keeping

AFP, Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Sixes produces many sights not often seen at a cricket match: boundaries virtually every ball, matches lasting no more than 45 minutes -- and the world's greatest batsman keeping wicket.

Brian Lara, playing in an All-Stars side at the tournament this weekend, has welcomed the chance to don the gloves and deal with deliveries from teammates Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Anil Kumble.

Normally a slip-fielder before he retired from the international game, Lara said he was keen to take on the challenge of keeping wicket to some of the game's greats.

"One of the reasons I have been looking forward to the Sixes is the chance to do some wicket-keeping," he said. "Playing alongside Shane and Glenn is new, and it is equally unusual for me to be behind the stumps."

Lara, Test cricket's top run-scorer, took to the task with ease, securing the All-Stars' first wicket of the weekend when catching Australian opener Nathan Reardon for 19.

For Lara another advantage of keeping wicket was not having to bowl -- all other fielders in the six-a-side team have to deliver an over.

In Lara's glorious 131-match Test career, he bowled only 60 balls and never took a wicket.

"I thought Brian kept well," said All-Stars' colleague Heath Streak from Zimbabwe. "He got through it all right and I think he would prefer that to bowling."

No better way for Sanath to start the tour

APP, Adelaide

Sri Lankan opener Sanath Jayasuriya opened his final tour of Australia in spectacular fashion when he blasted 154 against a Chairman's XI here on Saturday.

Facing an attack made up of state players not required for domestic matches, the veteran led his team to 335-4 at stumps on the first day of the three-day match.

The Sri Lankans also enjoyed useful contributions from recalled opener Marvan Atapattu (56), Michael Vandort (55) and Thilan Samaraweera (53 not out).

But there were some concerns over an apparent thigh injury to wicketkeeper and batsman Kumar Sangakkara, who retired hurt soon after having his leg strapped.

Jayasuriya began slowly but developed a liking for the medium pace of Paul Roje (0-82) and wrist spin of Cullen Bailey (0-100), who was at one point dispatched for three legside sixes in as many deliveries.

The Sri Lankans play the first Test against Australia in Brisbane on November 8-12.

BRIEF SCORES

SRI LANKA: First innings 335 for 4 (Jayasuriya 154, Atapattu 56, Vandort 55, Samawareena 53 not out; Heal 50-3)

Freddie let me down: Fletcher

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former England coach Duncan Fletcher says Andrew Flintoff "let him down" with his World Cup drinking antics.

Flintoff fell off a pedal and was one of six England players fined following a drinking session after England's defeat to New Zealand in St Lucia.

The all-rounder had also been warned as to his future conduct during the Ashes defeat when he was England's captain.

And Fletcher told the Daily Mail: "I supported Andrew but he let me down in an area that he had real control over."

Flintoff captained England to a 5-0 Ashes defeat in Australia in the absence of Michael Vaughan.

And he was sacked as England vice-captain at the World Cup and banned for a game after the pedal was broken following the six-wicket defeat to New Zealand.

England then failed to progress beyond the Super Eight stage at the World Cup in the West Indies, prompting Fletcher to resign.

"I've supported a lot of players but Andrew drank again at the World Cup after what had happened in Australia while I was taking a pasting," Fletcher continued.

"I don't regret making him captain."

"The problem was, in the absence of Vaughan, there were so many unknowns."

"It's fascinating to wonder how good (Andrew) Strauss might have been as captain."

"But an imponderable is, how bad might Fred (Flintoff) have been with the whole drinking thing if he hadn't had the responsibility of the captaincy? And would he have taken Steve Harmison with him?"

The Zimbabwe-born coach is also hoping for a return to county cricket, having been at Glamorgan before taking up his post with England.



Members of the national kabaddi team pose for photographs at Zia International Airport prior to their departure for Macao yesterday.

England warn All-Stars

Cricket

APP, Hong Kong

England believe they have a serious chance of beating an All-Stars team that includes cricketing greats Shane Warne, Brian Lara and Glenn McGrath at the Hong Kong Sixes on Sunday.

The England team are to clash with the All-Stars in the quarterfinals of the tournament, which packs 21 five-overs-a-side games into two frenetic days of action.

"No one can pretend it is a highly tactical format of the game," England one-day international player Dimitri Mascarenhas said after scoring 20 not out in their opening match against New Zealand.

"But we are a very competitive bunch of players, and it is always an honour to represent England. The (100,000-dollar) winners' cheque is

naturally another reason to try our very best."

"No one is going to miss the opportunity to bowl out Lara or hit Warne or McGrath for a six," he added.

Mascarenhas, who hopes to be on England's tour of New Zealand early next year, said he was looking forward to the quarterfinal battle with Warne, his Hampshire county captain.

"It's fun to see how he fares in Sixes," he said. "I've played in this tournament before and it is not like cricket anywhere else."

The All-Stars also boast Indian spinner Anil Kumble, former England international Geraint Jones and hard-hitters Craig McMillan of New Zealand and Heath Streak of Zimbabwe.

England manager Mike Gatting said that, despite the carnival atmosphere at the Kowloon Cricket Club, his team was desperate to come out as eventual winners.

"The All-Stars are a pretty

decent side, especially with spinners like Shane Warne and Anil Kumble, but this is a game in which any result can come from any match. England are keen to win and we reckon we have a good shot."

Among the key players in the England side are Twenty20 specialist Darren Maddy and 22-year-old Luke Wright, who is tipped to have a future in the Test side.

On Saturday England lost to New Zealand, before beating India -- setting themselves up for the All-Stars' fixture.

All 10 teams finished Saturday's group games still in with a chance of winning the competition Sunday. Three games will be played early to settle the quarterfinal line-up.

Bangladesh, who field Mohammad Ashraf and Zunaed Siddique, and New Zealand are also seen as likely to perform well in the deciding matches.

Women's handball final today

UNB, Dhaka

Panchagarh and Dhaka reached the final of the first Invitational Women's Handball Tournament winning their semifinal matches at the Tetulia Pilot High School ground in Panchagarh yesterday.

The final will be held today at 3:00pm.

On way to the final, Dhaka crushed Dinajpur by 15-3 after leading the first half 7-2 in the first semifinal.

Mona

scored four goals while Maleka and Rosy netted three goals each for Dhaka.

In the day's other semifinal, Panchagarh eliminated Rajshahi by 15-10 after dominating the first half 7-5.

Shahida and Nishi scored six goals for the winners while Mina Khateno netted four goals for the losers.

Bangladesh

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SQUAD

Biplab Bhattacharya, Mazharul Islam Himel, Wali Faisal, Rajani Barman, Hasan Al Mamun, Ariful Islam, Mahmudul Hasan, Amit Khan Shuvro, Arman Aziz, Abdul Hossain, Zumrat Hossain Mithu, Zahid Hossain, Enamul Haque Sharif, Mohammad Robin, Zahid Hossain Emily and Saifur Rahman Moni.

Shoaib earns

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month but is stripped of the honour after he lost his place in the eleven in the ongoing one-day series against South Africa due to poor form.

Pakistan will also play three Tests which follow the one-day series. The Test squad will be announced later.

The three Tests will be played at New Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore.

SQUAD

Shoaib Malik (captain), Salman Butt, Imran Nazir, Yasir Hameed, Younis Khan, Mohammad Younus, Shahid Afridi, Misbahul Haq, Fawad Alam, Kamran Akmal, Mohammad Asif, Shoaib Akhtar, Umar Gul, Sohail Tanveer, Abdul Rehman, Rao Iftikhar.

ITINERARY

Nov 5 1st ODI Guwahati
Nov 8 2nd ODI Mohali
Nov 11 3rd ODI Kanpur
Nov 15 4th ODI Gwalior
Nov 18 5th ODI Jaipur

Akhtar promises his best

Cricket

APP, Lahore

Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar vowed Saturday to make the upcoming tour of India memorable after the paceman was recalled to the team for the crucial series against the archrivals.

"I promise that I will do my best and give my full effort on the tour of India to help my team win both the one-day and Test series," Akhtar said in an interview with AFP.

The 32-year-old was recalled on Friday for possibly his last tour of India after he served a ban of 13 international matches, punishment primarily for hitting a teammate with a bat last month.

Akhtar was also fined 3.4 million rupees (56,000 dollars) after he struck fellow fast bowler Mohammad Asif on the thigh after team practice in Johannesburg ahead of the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 Championship.

"I have missed a lot of cricket due to injuries and other reasons, but now I want to focus on my game and do my best for the country," said Akhtar who played his last Test in South Africa in January this year.

Despite the intense rivalry between the two teams, Akhtar said he is respected in India and is looking forward to the tour.

"This may be my last tour so I must do something special for the fans in India so that they remember me in a good way," said Akhtar.

His only complete tour of India was in 1999 when, as a newcomer to the Pakistan team, he took eight wickets in the Asian Test championship.

The punishment meant he

Batting woe

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batting points while at the same time denying their opponents full bowling bonus by declaring without folding.

Mehrab Hossain completed his fifty to reach 60 off 161 balls with the help of four boundaries.

He resumed the day on 237-4. Sylhet used nine bowlers with Nazmul Hossain claiming highest three for 51 runs.

KHULNA-CHITTAGONG

Faisal Hossain scored 85 as Chittagong recovered from a precarious start to finish the day with some solace at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium.

Left-arm spinner Murad Khan captured four wickets after Mashrafe Mortaza produced the first breakthrough as Chittagong were toting at 128-5.

But Faisal and Dhaman Ghosh added 99 runs for the sixth wicket that included six boundaries.

Earlier, Khulna were all out for 410 after resuming the day on 361-7.

BRIEF SCORES

RAJSHAHI: First innings 301 all out in 130.1 overs (Jahurul 4, Rabul 1, Rafiqul 13, Naeem 0, Mashud 89, Mashrafe 1-44, Rasel 1-48, Murad 4-67).

Shevchenko struggling'

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is what it will be with Andriy. He is a very good player with a good attitude."

Another player who has struggled recently is Shaun Wright-Phillips and the coach insists he cannot give any guarantees about his future at Chelsea.

"That is why they are in the squad and why we pay them wages. It is not personal against anyone. I am thinking about the team."

Grant left Wright-Phillips out of his squad for the Schalke match, fuelling reports that the England captain was unhappy at Stamford Bridge.

Manchester City manager Sven Goran Eriksson, whose side face Chelsea on Saturday, has made it clear he would love to bring Wright-Phillips back to Eastlands if the Blues decide to sell him.

Grant acknowledges Wright-

Phillips is bound to be unhappy if he is not playing but, while he has no immediate intention to sell him,

missed Pakistan's Test series and four one-day matches against South Africa. He has been named in the squad for the fifth and final one-dayer against the Proteas here on Monday.

"Those were the golden moments of my career and I still want to get Tendulkar and Dravid's wickets because they are special players," said Akhtar who missed Pakistan's 2005 India tour due to injury.

His last tour to India ended in ignominy after he and fellow paceman Mohammad Asif were expelled after testing positive to the banned steroid nandrolone, two days before the start of the Champions Trophy.

Akhtar was banned for two years and do not then before the bans were lifted on appeal.

Akhtar said both the one-day and Test series will be exciting.

"Since our pace attack is better than theirs I feel the balance is tilted towards Pakistan and if we bat well then we can return as winners."

Pakistan leave for New Delhi on November 1 and will play the first of five one-day internationals at Guwahati on November 5.

It will be followed by three Tests in New Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore.

All-rounder Jacob Oram bowled the touring New Zealanders into a strong position on the second day of a four-day match against a South African Invitation XI at Goodyear Park Friday.

The tall medium-pacer took four for 17 in 14 overs as the Invitation XI were bowled out for 156 in reply to the tourists' first innings total of 318. Bad light ended play at the end of the Invitation team's innings.

Ahmed Amla, elder brother of Test batsman Hashim, was the only Invitation XI batsman to shine, making 67 before he was eighth man out.

Shane Bond and Chris Martin bowled impressively with the new ball as the first three wickets fell for 33 runs.

Oram then wrecked the middle order, taking the next four wickets on a cool, overcast day. New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori wrapped up the innings by taking the last three wickets, including that of Amla, who made his runs off 133 balls with nine fours.

The only significant support for Amla came from former Test wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum took four catches before finishing the innings by stumping Emy Mbhlati.

BRIEF SCORES

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 318

SOUTH AFRICAN INVITATION XI: First innings 156

Razzaq's

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domestic matches to win back his place in the national team.