

Sehwag hopes to do well

PTI, Ahmedabad

Flamboyant opener Virender Sehwag, who has been selected to the national ODI team against Pakistan, today said he was happy to get back into the side and hoped to repeat his past performance against Pakistan.

"I was hopeful that my name would come up because in the past I had done well against Pakistan," he said, adding that, "I am hopeful of repeating my performance in the coming series."

When asked by reporters whether he felt bad for Rahul Dravid, he said Dravid is a great player and has scored over 10,000 runs in one-day internationals. "Therefore I feel bad for him but it all depends on the selectors."

He said, "I was expecting a call against the Australians but as I was injured then, so I expected to be recalled against Pakistan." About his personal fitness, Sehwag said fitness drills have benefited him a lot. "I have lost weight and my fielding and running between the wickets have improved."

On the Pakistan series, he said it would be a tough one. "They are a good, tough and a young side. They have bowlers like Shoaib, Asif and Umar Gul who have been playing well in the last two to three years and it is not easy to play against quality fast bowling." He said that he would play "in whatever position my captain wants me to bat," when pointed out that there were other openers like Sourav Ganguly, Robin Uthappa and Sachin Tendulkar in the side.

About his batting, he said "I am very confident, I have got runs today." Asked about the captaincy of Mahendra Singh Dhoni, he said Dhoni was a good future captain and his mind works fast on the field.

Warne ready to relinquish feat

AFP, Hong Kong

Test cricket's top wicket-taker Shane Warne said Sunday he will have no regrets when rival spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran overtakes him at the top of the charts.

Murali is currently on Sri Lanka's tour of Australia and is just nine short of breaking Warne's record 708 Test wickets.

"Good luck to Murali, the record doesn't really worry me," said Warne, who has retired from Test cricket but is in Hong Kong playing quickfire six-a-side cricket.

"It has been nice to hold the record for three or four years. I always played my style of cricket and the wickets were nice, but it is more about the spirit in which you play the game."

"I'd like to think I have been an entertainer in the 16 years or so I've been playing. I hope my legacy is that I've never given up, have always been competitive, and that people have enjoyed that. So the record is not the most important thing."

"But," Warne added, "hopefully the Aussie batsmen can still make it a little bit hard for him."

Murali, 35, and Warne, 38, both started their Test careers in 1992, but the Sri Lankan has only played in 113 matches, compared with the Australian's 145.

In a coup for the Hong Kong Sixes, both the third and fourth all-time Test wicket-takers are also playing in the tournament -- Anil Kumble (566) and Glenn McGrath (563).

Warne declined to respond to rumours he will play in either of the two rival money-spinning Twenty20 leagues being planned in India, but said more Sixes cricket would help promote the sport.

"It would be really good if we had a couple more weekends like this one," he said. "A Sixes event in a place like Dubai would be great to spread the word of cricket."

Chelsea Rout

FROM PAGE 20
Marcus Bent

An Olivier Kapo penalty and a Liam Ridgeway strike allowed the Blues to equalise twice before Kapo sealed the points nine minutes from the end.

Trinidad international Kenwyne Jones rescued a point for Sunderland with a goal four minutes from time after Wales midfielder Simon Davies had given Fulham a first-half lead at the Stadium of Light.

Reading continued to defy predictions that they would succumb to 'second season syndrome' as a 2-1 win over Newcastle left Steve Coppell's side well clear of the relegation battle.

Shane Long's 84th minute strike proved decisive after a Michael Duberry own goal had allowed the Magpies to cancel out a first-half opener from Long's Ireland compatriot Dave Kitson.

Portsmouth and West Ham's meeting at Fratton Park ended in a goalless stalemate after the Hammers' Robert Green saved a stoppage time penalty from Zimbabwean forward Benjamin Mwaruwan.



Chief guest Lt. General ATM Zahirul Alam and Mamun Rashid, managing director and country officer of Citibank NA, are seen with the winners of the Citi Cup golf tournament at a prize distribution ceremony on Friday.

Tears over sledging

AFP, Sydney

Australia's cricketers rediscovered sportsmanship after a barrage of callers complaining about their behaviour reduced Cricket Australia's receptionist to tears, a new official history says.

Authors Gideon Haigh and David Frith were given complete access to Cricket Australia's archives for the book "Inside Story" and the governing body told them to produce a warts-and-all account of its activities.

"We ask the cricketers who wear the baggy green to play hard but fair and it was only logical to ask our historians to do the same," chairman Creagh O'Connor said.

The book gives insights into events that have shaped the game here since 1905, using both the archives of Cricket Australia -- formerly the Australian Cricket Board -- and interviews with players and officials.

It recounts the controversial "Bodyline" series against England in 1932-33, cricket's move to commercialism in the 1970s and confirms that Shane Warne's off-field behaviour was the reason he never captained the Australian Test team.

The book also details how in 2003 a humble receptionist shamed Australia's all-conquering cricketers into becoming better sports.

Undisputed masters of the cricketing world, the Australian Test team in the early years of the millennium alienated even some of its own fans through a mixture of

excessive sledging and boorish behaviour.

While successful Australian teams of the past had been lauded as the "Invincibles" and "unbeatables," this one was dubbed the "unloveables" because of its snarling attitude and strutting manner.

The 2003 World Cup win was overshadowed by Shane Warne's drugs ban, Darren Lehmann was suspended for five games for yelling a racist term after being run out against Sri Lanka and other players were reprimanded for abuse and dissent.

The flashpoint came in the West Indies in May 2003, when paceman Glenn McGrath baited Ramnaresh Sarwan with a lewd taunt.

The batsman had the temerity to respond in kind, at which the Australian paceman exploded with rage, looming over the diminutive Sarwan and threatening to "rip your throat out."

The image was flashed around the world and the sporting reputation of Australia's players sank to a new low, reinforcing the impression that they could dish out abuse but not take it.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said he knew the unsporting behaviour was damaging players' reputations, but reining it in was posing a problem.

"What became obvious in conversations with the players was that they were in denial, and they were in denial because they were insulated from the consequences of the fall-out from that sort of behaviour," Sutherland told the authors.

Cricket Australia's solution to the dilemma was simple and effective.

tive.

At a function in Sydney, officials took aside senior players including Steve Waugh, Lehmann, McGrath and Matthew Hayden and Ricky Ponting.

They confronted them with footage of recent incidents, along with comments from sponsors saying they were uncomfortable to be seen as supporting such behaviour and read letters and emails from outraged fans.

"Most effectively, they saw an interview with Emma Hopley, the Cricket Australia receptionist for the past year, who told of how she had been reduced to tears by fulminating members of the public," the book says.

It said Waugh was soon drafting a 'Spirit of Cricket' manifesto that set guidelines for the players' on- and off-field behaviour.

"I wanted us to be remembered for the right reasons," he said.

The Spirit of Cricket programme, extolling the virtues of playing "hard but fair" was launched in October 2003 and the history book says it soon had an impact.

"Instances of truculence and petulance became more noteworthy for being rarer," the authors wrote, with Australia sustaining only one International Cricket Council charge in the next 28 Tests and one in the following 96 one-day internationals.

"During the Ashes series of 2005, Ponting was even criticised for being too friendly and easy going."

"As complaints go, it was an agreeable change."

Bangladesh

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phone to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

With all these excuses, the team will return home on October 30. With no international commitment before next June's SAFF Championship in addition to the poor result in Dushanbe, there is little chance that Nayeemuddin will keep his job.

BFF, which has already indicated it is not interested to keep the 60-year-old Indian, is expected to take a decision on Nayeem by this month.

From the 19 teams that clear the first round, the lowest eight based on ranking move on to the second round and the other 11 to round three. The five top seeds -- Australia, Korea Republic, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Iran -- join the qualification process in the third round.

The draw for the third round will take place in Durban, South Africa, on November 25, 2007.

TEAMS

TAJIKISTAN: Mukanin, Zubaydov, Nosirov, Khujamov, Negmatov (Barotov 46), Rabinov, Kholmatov, Makhmudov (Shodzovorov 77), Hakimov, Vaskulov (Vasiev 46) and Mukhiddinov.
BANGLADESH: Biplab, Hassan Al Mamun, Rajan, Shuvra (Mahmudul Hasan 74), Waly, Arif, Abul (Sharif 74), Arman Aziz, Mithu (Robin 78), Emily and Moni.

Napoli humble

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beaten in the Cagliari goal.

The hosts broke the deadlock on 71 minutes as a deflection left Alessandro Rosina clean through on goal to beat the helpless Fortin.

Cagliari's misery was doubled late on as Motta's header took a wicked deflection off Michele Ferri for a cruel own goal.

The match of the weekend on Sunday takes place at the San Siro as European champions AC Milan look for their first home league win of the season against fourth-placed Roma.

Milan have drawn three and lost one of their first four home league matches and already sit 10 points off Inter as they languish just four points above the relegation zone down in 11th place.

Citi Cup golf concludes

SPORTS REPORTER

Teb Marius won the men's title while SSSon clinched the women's crown in the second Citi Cup Golf tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday.

Citibank NA organized the two-day meet.

Commandant, National Defence College, Lt. General ATM Zahirul Alam distributed prizes among the winners as chief guest while Mamun Rashid, managing director and Citi country officer, was also present.

Mamun, Asif in JPC TT final

SPORTS REPORTER

The annual sports of Jatiya Press Club got underway yesterday with the table tennis competition.

Syed Mamun of BSS and Asif Iqbal of Janakantha moved into the singles final when they won their respective semifinals on the opening day of 11-day sports to mark 53rd founding anniversary of the Press Club.

Mamun eliminated Abdullah Faruq while Asif beat his teammate Uttam Chakravarty in the semis. The final will be held today.

Dhaka eves lift handball title

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka emerged champions of the First Invitational Women's handball tournament with a 19-16 victory over Panchagarh in the final at the Tetulia Pilot High School ground in Panchagarh yesterday.

Dhaka led the first half 10-9. Akerunnnessa scored six goals for the winners while Shahida, adjudged best player of the tournament, netted six for Panchagarh.

Manjoor Alam Pradhan, UNO of Tetulia Upazila, distributed prizes as chief guest.

On way to the final, Dhaka crushed Dinajpur 15-3 while Panchagarh eliminated Rajshahi 15-10 on Saturday.

BCB's best kept

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Some even doubted the effort made by the new committee in their drive to find Whatmore's successor but the board members managed to surprise the cricketing circle with this coup.

Siddons first expressed his reluctance to take the responsibility while talking with a BCB official during the ICC World Twenty20 Championship in South Africa but he changed his mind during his discussion with Lipu in India last week.

The former national skipper met the Australian assistant coach in Mumbai during the series against India.

"For greater interest, we didn't want to make the discussion in public. We have a very high expectation with the national team coach and no doubt, Siddons was the most preferred in the list," said Lipu.

"Although, he did not have a rich international career as a player, he had a very healthy record in first-class competition. The most encouraging fact is that he has already made his mark as a coach," he added.

The lively Siddons, who played only one one-day international for Australia against Pakistan in 1988 and has also played Australian Rules football, impressed Lipu most.

"His interest about the support staff and facilities is really encouraging but what impressed me most was his energetic character," he said.

It was a much more demanding issue for the new committee to appoint a national coach and they are all set to fill the four months vacancy.

"But in the end, the national team's performance under him will be counted," added Lipu.

'I am mentally stronger'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Muttiah Muralidaran's first Test tour with the Sri Lankan team to Australia in 12 years has so far been a tale of police escorts at the airport, security fears, plainclothes people in the crowd... and plenty of hype.

While it's true Muralidaran had received a hostile reception on previous tours from crowds who continue to chant "no-ball" despite his regular clearances from the ICC, the escorts were there, in fact, to ward off the media, while the plainclothes are part of Cricket Australia's normal plans.

So as Muralidaran stepped up to bowl his first ball of the trip, it was unsurprising that he found rumours of the so-called bear pit ready to bait him in Adelaide had been greatly exaggerated. In their place was a placid Sunday crowd who were quiet as church mice, save for the children playing cricket on the hill. It was hardly fire and brimstone.

Of course, this practice match, against a Chairman's XI, has not attracted the beer-swilling, barracking kind of fans -- the cold and the lack of Australian stars has made it ideal for the quiet enthusiast -- but nevertheless Muralidaran couldn't have had a quieter, easier start to his tour as he adjusts back to playing cricket for the first time since August.

In fact, the only problems came from the weather. "It was so, so windy," he said. "Fast bowlers can't bowl in the wind, and the wicket

was so slow because of the rain."

The day also tested his bicep for the first time in two months since he injured it playing for Lancashire against Kent. He then missed the ICC World Twenty20 and the one-dayers against England. But he confirmed his recovery was "coming along well" and that this warm-up (30 overs today -- "no problems" -- and more expected on Monday) could be ample preparation for the Tests: "it depends on the management."

Physically he looked in great shape, and he's made of stern stuff mentally too. He ignored Arjuna Ranatunga's advice not to tour here and has previously welcomed the rigorous public testing of his action, when Mark Nicholas and Michael Slater oversaw an experiment on television in which he bowled in a brace.

It doesn't bother him, though, and he will merely keep trying on the pitch. "I try my best and that's all I can do. Mentally, I am very strong, stronger than most other people. I keep fighting -- if I have to bowl 40 overs, I will bowl 40 overs. I have to keep trying because if you don't keep trying you're not going to achieve anything."

Far worse than any no-ball chants -- "Now I'm used to it" -- would be racism. "Whatever race you come from you are born with it, you can't change anything. But no-balling, people can say whatever they want -- they are opinions, that's all. But they're not using the filth. Before they use the no-ball if they use the filth word then it's bad." He says nobody has shouted anything racially-oriented at him in Australia, although things have

been thrown at him, during the Super Test in Sydney last year -- "Those kinds of things aren't good."

He's not going to expect an entirely trouble-free tour, though, anticipating "good times and bad times." But so far, so good, while Ricky Ponting and Andrew Symonds have helped by appealing for cricket fans to appreciate his craft and leave aside the no-ball chants. "I would like to thank them for saying that. Symonds is a very good friend of mine and he would have also felt very bad with whatever happened in India."

"Those things should have not happened. People have to come and just enjoy. In Sri Lanka you wouldn't have had a problem like that, because people come and enjoy. Even if you lose they would congratulate the other team, so that's the way it should be."

He is about to enjoy his cricket, with the team aiming for their first Test win on Australian soil. "This is the best chance because you won't see in a few years' time Sanath (Jayasuriya) playing, or Marvan (Atapattu) or me or so many others playing. At this time Australia are also in a winning frame of mind, so it's not going to be easy. We have to do something special in the middle to beat them."

And winning is more important to him than the chance to overcome Shane Warne's Test record of 708 wickets on Australian soil; he is nine short of the record. "If I can't do it here I will do it against England. I'm going to be playing for another two years or three years so eventually it's going to come, so the challenge is to win a Test here."

Method and madness

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Two years ago, on another October evening, a day after another Challenger Trophy, the national selectors decided to "rest" another former Indian captain. Sourav Ganguly, then out with a mild injury, was left out of the Indian squad for the first two matches of the home series against Sri Lanka and needed to wait another year and a half before his next one-day.

Now it's Dravid who faces the brunt. "Rest" is a commonly used euphemism in Indian selection circles and what it means is anyone's guess. Dilip Vengsarkar, the current chairman of selectors, has said Dravid "will be back soon" but also added "fitness and fielding have become very important in the one-day game, so he will have to show it playing for his state". Logic suggests that Dravid has been dropped for his fielding. If true, there will be a few in the squad dashing to the nearest gym. Incidentally Dravid's replacement, Virender Sehwag, is no Asafa Powell and has done little to deserve a recall.

"Rest" tells you nothing about the selectors' motives. Have they decided to give Dravid a break so he can regain his form? If so, will his performance in a four-day Ranji Trophy match tell them anything?

SL Sixes heroes

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Kaushalya Weeraratne (32) and Jeewantha Kulatunga (28) also helped carry the side to its first-ever Hong Kong Sixes victory, which brought with it a winners' cheque of 100,000 dollars.

In the All-Stars' final innings, Test cricket's top scorer Brian Lara reminded the crowd of his glory days with four sixes lofted over the hospitality marquees.

Geraint Jones, currently out of favour for the England

wicketkeeper role, was a late call-up but his fielding caught the eye and in the final he scored three huge sixes off his first three balls.

Former Australian strike bowler Glenn McGrath was on the subs bench for the title-decider after dislocating a finger while fielding earlier in the day.

The weekend saw nine national teams compete against the All-Stars in 21 matches that lasted fewer than 45 minutes each.

Akhtar rushed back

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said Malik.

However the Pakistan captain's counterpart Graeme Smith warned that the pressure was on Akhtar to perform after such a long absence.

"Akhtar is the one who is making a comeback not us. Certainly, we know what he is capable of. We are prepared for him in this game because we always knew he was available for the fifth game so it's not a surprise for us," the South African skipper said.

"He is short of cricket, it's the first game for him in a very long time so whether they will risk him or not is the key in such an important game."

South Africa, who won the earlier Test series, clinched the first one-day match in Lahore by 45 runs before losing the next two by 25 runs and six wickets respectively.

Smith remains confident of clinching the series but he described the Lahore wicket as "a touch underprepared" ahead of the

decider.

"How it's going to play will be interesting to see but our confidence is good and that's always the key going into important games," he said.

"So far it's been a very successful tour for us, we played some really good cricket."

"We are confident ... it will be fantastic to finish off on a high note and then catch a nice flight back home," he added.

TEAMS

PAKISTAN: Mohammad Hafeez, Imran Nazir, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Shoaib Malik (captain), Misbahul Haq, Kamran Akmal, Abdur Rehman, Sohail Tanvir, Shoaib Akhtar, Rao Iftikhar.

SOUTH AFRICA: Graeme Smith (captain), Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Jean-Paul Duminy, Mark Boucher, Shaun Pollock, Albie Morkel, Johan Botha, Makhaya Ntini, Andre Nel.

With the game's big hitters letting loose at the tiny Kowloon Cricket Club, 275 sixes were scored and at least 40 balls were lost.

England, who fielded Twenty20 specialist Darren Maddy and rising star Luke Wright, fell in the quarterfinals.

India had earlier crashed out at the qualifying stage to the disappointment of their vocal supporters and the Sixes' organisers, who are keen to boost the event's TV audience in the massive south Asia market.

New Zealand and Pakistan were the losing semi-finalists. Shane Warne, 38, said he had enjoyed playing alongside some old friends and rivals.

"This has been my first Sixes and it has been a great couple of days. After we won the first few games, we really wanted to win the whole thing."

"Watching Brian (Lara) out there brings back some bad memories of bowling to him," he joked.

"Glenn (McGrath) is obviously an old mate and Anil Kumble I have total respect for. We talk a lot about leg-breaks."

The tournament, first held in 1992, produces frenetic cricket in which six-a-side teams bat for only five overs each and every fielder has to bowl, apart from the wicketkeeper.

Up until the final the overs are sixballs each. It has a long record of attracting the game's greatest names, with Viv Richards, Sachin Tendulkar and Andrew Flintoff all appearing in past years.

Fun back at the Bridge

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Chelsea, that is good."

Eriksson had enjoyed a serene start to life in English club football but this, as he admitted, was a "wake-up call".

The visitors came into this game flying high in third place but their defending was amateurish and Eriksson could not hide his anguish after suffering the worst defeat of his managerial career.

"I am very disappointed," he said. "I have never lost 6-0 and I'm sure it has never happened to the players either. We have had talk of Manchester City playing good football - maybe too much talk - but if you don't defend well,

this is what happens.

"It was not good enough for Premier League standard and if you give (Frank) Lampard, Essien, Drogba and the rest that space they will kill you. Chelsea are a fantastic football team but we made them look better than they are with the way we defended."

"I am not alone in being very disappointed. We failed completely to defend as a team and it is a wake-up call for all of us."

"We are in on Sunday to talk and train and prepare for a very tough Carling (League) Cup game against Bolton - that is the only good thing from today."