

Brad does not worry Mahela

CRICINFO, undated

Mahela Jayawardene has played down Brad Hogg as a potential Test threat as Australia's selectors prepare to choose the team for the first Test at the Gabba. Hogg has been in one-day mode all year but returned to first-class cricket with eight wickets in a Man-of-the-Match effort for Western Australia against Victoria.

Jayawardene said Hogg's success in ODI cricket -- he has 144 wickets at 26.76 -- could not be seen as an indication of how he would perform if chosen ahead of Stuart MacGill in the Test team. "That's mainly because in the one-day game you're trying to play a lot of shots against him and create more opportunities," Jayawardene told the Australian.

"That's when he's pretty aggressive because of his variation, but in the long version you probably have much more time. If you're patient enough I'm sure he'll drop a few loose ones to you so you can help yourself."

Jayawardene said Hogg was probably one of the top ten spinners in the world but he was most dangerous in limited-overs games. "He's a decent spinner," Jayawardene said. "But how you play Hogg in one-day cricket and how you play Hogg in Test cricket is going to be totally different."

Hogg bowled 31.3 overs in two innings and grabbed 8 for 83 as Western Australia beat Victoria in a match that finished at the MCG on Monday. He gave the batsmen few if any loose balls and said it was easy to make the switch back to the longer form of the game. "You can't really think about it, you just try and keep it on a good length and try and keep it tight and let the rest do the business," Hogg said.

On Thursday Australia will announce their squad for the Brisbane Test that begins the following Thursday. MacGill was thought to be Shane Warne's natural replacement but his flat performance in a Pura Cup match at the SCG -- he had match figures of 4 for 280 from 55 overs -- and Hogg's success has created renewed interest in the slow-bowling position.

Bangladesh win opener

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh kabaddi team got off to a bright start in the Asian Indoor Games beating Japan 39-28 with two tonas in their first match in Macau yesterday.

The winners led the first half 18-15.

5-star Mashrafe

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Stylish batsman Alok Kapali scored 42 as the Sylhetis faltered their way through to 195 runs in 49.5 overs. Kapali got some support from captain Rajin Saleh, Ejaz Ahmed and Saif Mahmud. But Dhaka's spin was too much for them. Man-of-the-match Mosharraf Hossain took three wickets while captain Mohammad Ashraful picked two. Mahmudullah Riyad and Mehrib Hossain took one each while pacemen Mahbubul Alam and Niaz Moshked took a wicket each.

In reply, Dhaka got off to a flying start with openers Javed Omar and Al Shahrar sharing a 66-run opening stand. Pinch hitter Mosharraf missed his 50 by a run as he rounded off his bowling effort with a 68-ball innings that featured three fours and a six.

BRIEF SCORES

KHULNA: 196 all out in 46 overs (Imrul 21, Nahidul 8, Bashir 27, Shakib 3, Tusbar 44, Jamal 28, Mashrafe 5, Salim 3, Ziaur 30, Rasel 3, Murad 1 not out, Sabbir 4-32, Kamrul 2-40, Ehsanul 1-21, Afab 1-39, Rubel 1-43). CHITTAGONG: 187 all out in 46.4 overs (Mahbubul 14, Nafis 4, Afab 7, Nazimuddin 5, Elias 18, Ehsanul 41, Faisal 19, Dhiman 38, Sabbir 0, Rubel 9, Kamrul 8 not out, Mashrafe 5-31, Ziaur 2-40, Rasel 2-43, Shakib 1-38. Result: Khulna won by 9 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (Khulna). RAJSHAHE: 295-8 in 50 overs (Jahurul 55, Zunaed 120, Naeem 17, Mashud 5, Mushfiqur 20, Forhad 24, Suhrawardi 24, Shahzad 3, Mahbub 9 not out, Delwar 7 not out, Tarikul 4-57, Ariful 2-74, Sajidul 1-54, Arafat 1-63).

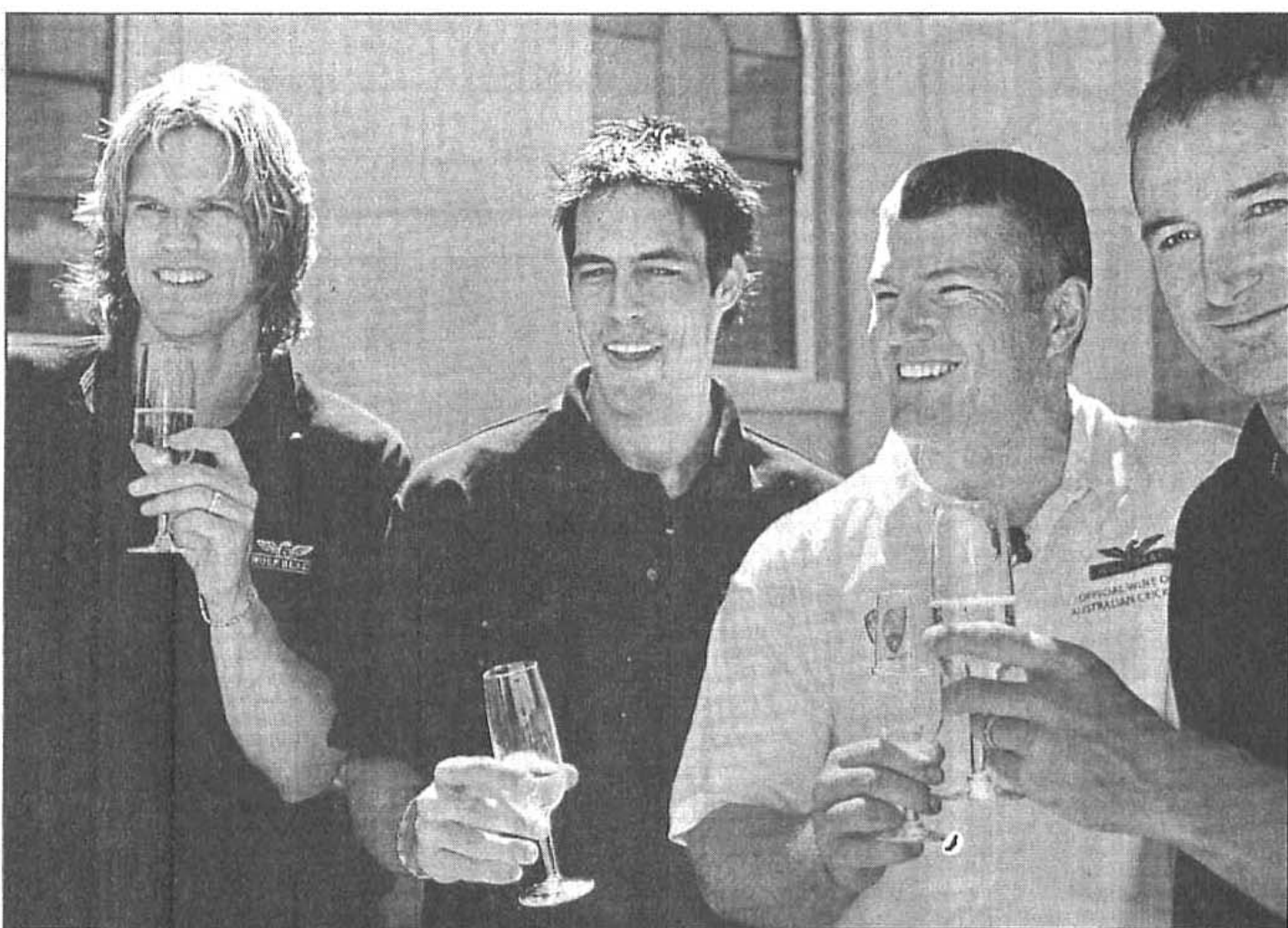
BARISAL: 179 all out in 48 overs (Shahrar 0, Hannan 9, Imran 24, Ariful 39, Raqibul 15, Raisul 2, Arafat 6, Bashir 4, Sajid 40, Tarikul 1, Shaheen 30 not out, Farhad 3-28, Sohrawardi 2-16, Shahzad 2-30, Naeem 1-29, Delwar 1-41). Result: Rajshahi won by 116 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Zunaed Siddique (Rajshahi). SYLHET: 195 all out in 49.5 overs (Mahud 24, Intiaz 1, Rajin 35, Saif 28, Kapali 42, Sharif 1, Ejaz 27, Nazmul 28 not out, Tapash 0, Enamul 6, Nabil 0, Mahbubul 1-36, Niaz 1-22, Mosharraf 3-32, Ashraful 2-23, Mehrib 1-25, Riyad 1-27). DHAKA: 196-3 in 41.2 overs (Javed 48, Al Shahrar 35, Mehrib 34, Mosharraf 49 not out, Ashraful 9 not out, Nabil 2-26, Alok 1-27). Result: Dhaka won by 7 wickets.

Lebanon last

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on November 25, 2007. FIRST ROUND WINNERS Iraq, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Oman, Hong Kong, Syria, Thailand, Turkmenistan, UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, Singapore, DPR Korea, Lebanon, Indonesia and Kuwait.



(L-R) Australian players Nathan Bracken, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart MacGill and Phil Jacques toast as they entertain guests during a winery promotion in Sydney on Tuesday.

Now or never for MacGill

AFP, Sydney

Stuart MacGill admits his 40-Test career will be over if he is left out of the first cricket Test against Sri Lanka in Brisbane next week.

"If they're not going to pick me at the Gabba, then they're not going to pick me," MacGill said here Tuesday.

MacGill, who hopes to take over from the retired Shane Warne when the Australian team is announced on Thursday, said the Brisbane pitch traditionally favoured a wrist-spin bowler, and was the logical place for him to play.

"The Gabba is very good to bowl spin on. It bounces, it turns, it's fast... you get results there," MacGill said.

"If you beat someone, they're beaten. There's no way out."

MacGill's strike rate in Brisbane is slightly below his career average.

In three Tests at the ground against England, West Indies and India, the 36-year-old leg-spinner has taken 11 wickets at 26, compared with his career average of five wickets per Test at an average of 27.

Warne took 68 wickets in 11 Tests at the Gabba, at an average of just over 20.

MacGill has not played for Australia since taking 16 wickets in a two-Test series in Bangladesh in April 2006.

MacGill, who has 198 Test wickets, has no doubts he is good enough to take plenty more.

"I know for a fact that when I'm bowling well I'm good enough to play for anyone," he said.

"I know that I'm improving. I'm simplifying as a bowler and that's what comes with age."

"That's why spin bowlers get better with age, because they realise that most of what people say to them doesn't matter."

"Batsmen have to rely on their eye. I have to rely on my brain, and fortunately that's not degenerating very quickly at the moment."

MacGill is resigned that his elite playing career will be over should he not get chosen later this week.

"I'll be disappointed because I'll probably be a good indicator that I'm not going to play again," he said.

"But I'm very, very comfortable with everything that I've achieved to this point, so I think it would be a bit wrong for me to be too upset about missing out."

"I've got a lot of things that I want to achieve for New South Wales and that's keeping me in the game at the moment," he said.

Aussie stars Altrincham supporters

AFP, London

Australian cricket stars have given their support to a tiny English football team's bid for FA Cup glory.

Adam Gilchrist, Jason Gillespie and Glenn McGrath sent good luck messages to Altrincham chairman Geoffrey Goodwin, who drove the Aussie cricket team's bus around England during the 2005 Ashes series, after hearing his non-league club had reached the FA Cup first round.

Goodwin got on so well with the Australian players that they nicknamed him "Popeye" and have stayed in touch since the tour to England.

They didn't forget their old mate, after Altrincham, who play in the English National Conference, were drawn against Millwall -- FA Cup runners-up in 2004 -- in Saturday's draw.

Goodwin, whose club earned their tie against League One Millwall after a 1-0 win over Kendal Town in the fourth qualifying round, told the Sun newspaper:

"I've already had good luck messages from Adam Gilchrist and Jason Gillespie and I expect one from our good friend Glenn McGrath."

"My prayers have been answered for once and no one deserves it more than our manager Graham Heathcote. We are a family club and will welcome the Millwall fans, although the police bill will be high."

Siddons deal

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much enthusiastic to do something," he added.

The former national skipper was also impressed by Siddons's keen interest towards the structure and standard of the country's first-class cricket.

"Coaches like Dav Whatmore and Richard McInnes talked about our first-class cricket after quitting their jobs but Siddons looked exceptional as he started to pay attention from the very beginning. He firmly believes that a player should be prepared from the domestic level," Lipu explained.

"He is also not interested to run training camps in traditional manner like working with the whole squad. He rather wants to work with a group of players," he said.

Lipu also cautioned that it would not be wise to judge the new coach after his first assignment in New Zealand.

"He is going to start the job with a tough tour and he will get hardly two weeks to prepare the boys. We have to show patience," he added.

Lipu also informed that Shaun Williams will work with Siddons for the next few months as assistant coach.

Duncan blasts

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is saying about the wicket? Botham's commentary has long caused problems."

After England's match against Canada in the World Cup, England were invited by Rod Bransgrove -- the Hampshire chairman -- onto his boat for a party. "In the dressing room... Kevin Pietersen, who knows Bransgrove well from Hampshire, was asking the other players who was going on the boat," Fletcher wrote. "At least four or five of the senior players asked: 'Is Botham going?'"

"Pietersen found out Botham was indeed going and, when he relayed this in the dressing-room, a unanimous call of 'no thanks' rang out. None of the players went. For once they were standing up to someone in the media."

Sangakkara doubtful

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Kumar Sangakkara, the Sri Lanka vice-captain, is a doubtful starter for the first Test against Australia in Brisbane after scans revealed a grade one tear in his left hamstring. The injury was sustained on Saturday during the team's first warm-up match in Adelaide.

Sangakkara told Cricinfo that he remained optimistic of his chances of making the Test, which begins in Brisbane on November 8, although he will miss the second and final warm-up match against Queensland on Friday.

"I would say it's definitely a grade one tear," he said in Adelaide on Tuesday prior to flying to Queensland. "But we will have to see when the MRIs are assessed. Realistically, I'm just trying to make sure I do everything right with my treatment and make sure I get ready for the Test."

Sangakkara had only made one run in the first innings against the Chairman's XI before sustaining the injury. He had wanted to bat on with a runner, but the physiotherapist Tommy Simsek called him off the pitch. "He was quite right in taking me off as I could have made the injury bigger had I stayed on," Sangakkara said. He was rested as a precaution at first, but the pain began to worsen.

A grade one is the least serious type of tear, but he still needs daily treatment from the physio. He has since been testing his leg out in the gym and on the bike and says that he is already feeling better. "I'm not in any major pain, it's just discomfort."

The absence of Sri Lanka's vice-captain would be a big blow to the tourists who are aiming for their first Test win on Australian soil during the two-Test series.

Mahela Jayawardene, the captain, said: "He's been a vital com-

ponent obviously but if he's not fit the other guys have to step up to the plate. We would love to have Kumar there but if he's not going to be there the other guys have to step up to the responsibility."

Prasanna Jayawardene will take the gloves in the second tour match. He deputised well for Sangakkara during the first warm-up in Adelaide this week, with a host of catches, but has not yet batted on tour. He has impressed before, when Sangakkara played as a specialist batsman in the three-Test series against Bangladesh in July, and he scored his first maiden Test century, too.

Chanaka Welegedara was injured in the same match, straining his right quadriceps, while Sanath Jayasuriya picked up a cold. Sujeewa de Silva is expected to fly in to cover for Welegedara, his fellow fast bowler, and could be launched straight into the side on Friday. He has been playing for the A-side in Zimbabwe.

Turning the label around

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

South Africa have completed one of their most successful tours for a decade, with Test and one-day series wins against Pakistan, but the impact of their success may take a very long time to sink in for two reasons. First, the World Cup-winning Springboks are coming towards the end of their country-wide parade of the William Webb Ellis trophy, and second, Graeme Smith and his team will probably never quite understand just how they won the final game in Lahore.

With the series set up perfectly for the grand finale, the tourists were well set for one huge, final push -- and they slipped. They appeared to misread conditions at the Gadafai Stadium, batted meekly, and were outplayed for approximately 90 of the 96.3 overs the match lasted.

But they won. Or, more accurately, Pakistan lost. Hideously. Whatever the likes of Shaun Pollock, Jacques Kallis and Smith thought deep down while their hosts were vomiting up defeat from the stomach of victory, their looks of disbelief must have contained at least a smattering of irony. "So this is what we must have looked like," they might have said to themselves.

But Pakistan's choke, of course, was a very different beast to the one that normally attaches itself to the throats of South African cricket teams. There are two kinds of choke: the rabbit and the wolf.

In the first the victim sits quite still and terrified as the truck approaches on the highway, headlights on full beam. The second kind is so menacing and inspires such terror that panic and pandemonium take over. South Africa have perfected the art of the rabbit choke. Pakistan do the wolf version.

Brilliant as Kallis was during the Test series, his lack of form during the one-dayers was the single biggest reason why his team did not win more comfortably. Form, for Kallis in particular, is more a state of mind than about foot movement or timing. And when he believes that fate or the elements are conspiring against him, he finds it hard to unearth positive energy.

The pitches for the first two games in Lahore were cunningly prepared to undermine his game, and this had an effect on the rest of the top order, who take their cue from the master. When a ball keeps low or, heaven forbid, bounces a few inches more than expected, Kallis can look as though he has been delivered a hissing cobra. Few current players can make more of a bit of misbehaviour than Jacques Henry. And the others, with the exception of Herschelle Gibbs, believe his body language and the message it sends.

Coach Mickey Arthur should also take responsibility for publicly predicting "a shocker" of a pitch for the final game. It was clear from the moment Kallis made his ponderous start that a total of 230 had been, perhaps subconsciously, settled upon. In the event, conditions were far more 260 than 230.

Nonetheless South Africa won and remain firmly entrenched in second place on the ICC's league table behind Australia, and for that there must be good reason, apart from the home side's abysmal collapse.

Pollock was inspired and motivated by his hurtful omission from the Test XI, and his form with bat and ball was as good as at any time

in the last dozen years. Clearly there is much life left in the old dog.

Albie Morkel was a breath of fresh air, and having opted (on the back of an ankle injury a couple of years ago) to explore the role of a batting allrounder, a la Justin Kemp, showed indisputably that he can be the genuine article with bat as well as ball. A good showing this summer could easily see him positioned as one of the foundations upon which South Africa build their 2011 World Cup team.

It is hard to be sure whether Makhyaya Ntini's profligacy was a result of a conscious effort to bowl more wicket-taking deliveries or simply an inability to exert the control he once had, but either way his remarkable strike-rate was greater over the five matches than any South African bowler has managed in a series for years. Pollock has become meaner with every game, but with the bite of a glove puppet; his new-ball partner's ability to take early wickets has more than made up for the expense. A portent for a new role in the future? Perhaps.

But the most striking aspect of South Africa's series victory (again, apart from Pakistan's contribution) was the captaincy of Graeme Smith. For the first time since he took over at the tender age of 22, Smith remained calm at every turn. When events conspired against him, he kept a lid on his emotions, thought calmly and rationally, offered personal assurances to beleaguered troops, and backed his key men at key stages. And, whether the final reward came more as a result of his opponents' self-imposed asphyxiation or not, he will do extremely well to remember that cool heads are rewarded far more often than hot ones in the throes of sporting battle.

Real test for Valencia

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A game every three days is tiring and maybe he could do with a break," said Barcelona defender Gianluigi Zambrotta on Monday.

Valladolid are currently in the relegation zone two places off the foot of the table and their only win came on the first day of the season so Barca should have a good chance of taking over at the top if Real slip up.

Villarreal slipped back to third after their 4-1 thrashing at Real Zaragoza on Sunday so will be looking to do well at Levante, who

prop up the table and have just one point to their name so far.

"However, I don't think Levante will be easy to beat. They may be at the bottom but they don't seem that bad a team to me," said Villarreal's Turkish striker Nihat Kahveci on Monday.

Nevertheless, with Levante's sorry streak expected to enter double figures on Wednesday, comparisons are starting to be made with the infamous Sporting Gijon side of 1997-98 which went a record 23 games before getting a win.

Malik vows

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for four at one stage on Monday. Malik admitted that his team failed to deliver the knock out punch despite dominating the game.

"Our finishing has to improve that is for sure. We controlled 90 percent of the game against South Africa but in the 10 percent that really mattered we were not good enough," he said.

The skipper, however, refused to blame anyone for the defeat and backed his players. The return of fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar to the team also brings smile on the face of the skipper as he described him as an asset for the team.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 27 Wat 12 Bas-relief material 14 " 28 Beet's 2 Physicist 14 " 4 Miller cousin 3 Walk 15 Tibetan criller 7 Get making 4 Spring 19 Promise 8 Discuss- 36 Persian 20 "CSI" evi- sion Gulf dence 10 Waliki's 37 Dom decks 21 Furtive one 11 Spindle- 37 Modern 22 Carpen- welcome 38 From money 23 Carpen- structure 38 Repen- ment 24 Native 13 "Syrina" 39 Bumps 9 Old 25 Jewel 16 "A 40 Pigs' 10 26 Delicious 17 Compre- 41 Mass- 10 28 "USA 18 NAFTA 19 Yashmak 20 Dilibert's place 21 Under oath 22 Literary 23 Rodents 24 Alcabora, a.g.

CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF AN EMPLOYEE OF A CLOTHING MANUFACTURING COMPANY TOLD FIBS, I'D SAY THEY'RE FABRICATIONS.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: D equals R