



Ascene from yesterday's 10th Standard Chartered school chess tournament at the federation hall-room.

PHOTO: STAR

ECB replaces Zim with SL

AFP, London

Sri Lanka will play two Tests and three one-day internationals in England next April and May...

Collier said: "The strong and close relationship which we built up during our recent winter tours to Sri Lanka allowed the ECB, at short notice, to be able to approach Sri Lanka and confirm their availability for the international matches in the early part of next summer."

England cut off cricket relations with Zimbabwe last month following the re-election of President Robert Mugabe in polls marred by intimidation and ballot-rigging.

FIXTURE

- April 21-23 v Leicestershire (Leicester)
April 25-27 v Essex (Chelmsford)
April 29-May 3 v England Lions (Derby)
May 7-11 1st Test (Lord's)
May 15-19 2nd Test (Chester-le-Street)
May 21 v Somerset (Taunton)
May 24 1st ODI (Bristol)
May 27 2nd ODI (Edgbaston)
May 30 3rd ODI (Headingley)

Clarke elated with drubbing

AFP, Basseterre

Michael Clarke is thrilled that Australia were able to complete a rare One-day International series sweep over West Indies in the Caribbean.

Australia crushed West Indies by 169 runs on Sunday at Warner Park, following a strong batting performance and Mitchell Johnson's second five-wicket haul in ODIs to take the series 5-0.

Australia won the opening match by 84 runs in St. Vincent, the rain-affected second ODI by 63 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis Method, and the third ODI last Sunday by seven wickets in Grenada, as well as the fourth ODI last Friday by one run here.

Sunday's victory -- Australia's largest against West Indies -- also meant they became only the third team to sweep an ODI series in the Caribbean. Previously, South Africa and Pakistan were the two sides that achieved ODI series sweeps in the Caribbean.

They both accomplished the feat three years ago, when the Proteas won all five of their matches in a bilateral series, and the Pakistanis won all three in theirs.

"I think for the whole team it is a great feeling," Clarke said. "We have achieved the goal that we set before the start of the tour."

"We have played some brilliant cricket. We had some closer moments than we would have liked. But it has been a fantastic series, and I think full credit must go to the whole squad for the effort they have put in."

"It's good to know that there is still so much strength in the Australian team, despite the recent string of departures through retirement."

Clarke observed it was also vital for Australia to play strongly throughout the series, since they had dropped their guard in previous series once they had been decided which was a point regular captain Ricky Ponting stressed before he returned home on Friday with a damaged wrist.

Mendis impresses Bedi

INTERNET, undated



There is little magic remaining in this world, so the advent of Ajantha Mendis comes as a breath of fresh air...

Faced with an unorthodox practitioner who seems to have uncanny control over his craft given his age, Dhoni and his created like bunnies out of Mandrake's hat-dazed and confused, but somehow all part of the act. Such was Mendis' overwhelming presence on a vulture's head of pitch at the National Stadium in Karachi that even an intently admiring Muttiah Muralidaran was made to look pedestrian in comparison.

So even as cricket romantics rejoice, batsmen and their latest 'caddies', the computer analysts, have a problem on their hands: Just what is Ajantha Mendis? Is it possible to read him from the hand? He is a finger-spinner, but how does that explain the variations? The one that fizzes on straight but cannot be called a top-spinner; the off-break; leg-break, googly; even something resembling a doosra? Without any change in action? His breaks don't turn much, but what about the in-between length which bamboozled India's best?

And here you thought subtlety had disappeared from the game. Fact is, what Mendis advertised on the big stage on Sunday isn't

something new. The genesis of the 'carrom-ball' spinner, or flicker, if you will, can be traced back to Aussie Jack Iverson in the 1950s, who developed the method of gripping the ball between his thumb and middle finger, powerfully flicking the latter either way at the point of delivery.

John Gleeson perfected the art, and much like Mendis, they were all self-taught, mesmerizing bowlers. As Dhoni pointed out, it's simplistic to say the Indians played some bad shots in the final: it was Mendis' guile which induced it. His three best dismissals came against the left-handers Yuvraj, Raina and Pathan, who had no clue. The arrogant Sehwaag and Rohit Sharma, who played for the leg-break and found the ball cutting in, and RP Singh were duped. And eight overs and 13 runs later, it was all over.

"He would have taken eight wickets had Jayawardene not removed him," says former Indian captain and acclaimed spinner Bishan Singh Bedi. "What Mendis bowls looks complicated, but it is not. And that is subtlety of a high order. He's a bit like the early '90s Anil Kumble except he has much better control. But it's wrong to say Mendis is totally unorthodox. His grip is freaky, yes, but his run-up (a busy, shuffling gait), delivery stride and follow-through are technically very sound. Also, his biggest strength now, the straighter one which is closer to a flipper than a top-spinner, is possible only because he bowls with the shoulder, and has a perfect long-arm release. It's incredibly impressive and correct. He doesn't resort to the laxity in the ICC's elbow flexion

rules for effect. He's a delight, the first person after Sachin Tendulkar I would pay to watch."

That's high praise, indeed. Mendis has now risen from the ranks of a Tier B domestic team, the Army SC, to the top of the bowling charts in the Asia Cup. And single-handedly turned around a crucial final. But he's not the finished product yet, and a Test debut beckons. What next?

"Of course they'll figure him out the more he plays," says former spinner Maninder Singh. "But his rise is testimony to Lanka's unique coaching system. They don't mess around with natural talent, unlike our coaches who seem obsessed with correctness. Mendis is a freak, that's why he is so good. It's great for the game to finally have a spinner who seems to have the talent to hog the limelight in the Kumble-Warne-Murali mould."

Gleeson, though, after a very successful series against the West Indies in 1968-69, was worked out by batsmen, and Mendis might have his task cut out. Bedi, however, feels the bowler has the goods to survive over-exposure: "He is intelligent enough to raise his game, add new varieties, and his youthful enthusiasm is an asset. You can watch computers all you want, but he doesn't know English, so how will you get him to talk about his bowling? Also, he doesn't seem like a bowler who is interested in dot balls. He needs wickets. All this talk of his real test coming now is a bit over the top. I think he's up to the task."

The length of the wand, after all, doesn't really matter. The magic is in the wand itself.

Reds against all odds

FROM PAGE 17

"We finished third in the inaugural B. League and if we can have quality foreign players, we want to retain at least our last year's position," hoped the recent past national fullback, who also worked as a day labourer with his colleagues to repair the uneven BG Press ground, their new practice venue.

Instead of a posh life at a decent flat and training facilities at Uttara's Police Lines ground, the Reds players will now make their camp at five ordinary rooms adjacent to the new ground.

"It will be the residential camp for those who come outside from the city and we have made some adjustments for their comfort," added Titu, one of the few seniors who will work from home.

Apart from old guard Charles Ghansah, the Ghanaian centre-back, Nigerian defenders Victor and Michael took part in the opening day's training.

Muktijodha managed to retain midfielder Biddyt, defender Azizi Al Arman, ex-national forward

Kanchan and confirmed experienced players like Brothers goalkeeper Nizam (Brothers), Mohammedan defender Biplab, midfielders Asif (Chittagong Mohammedan), Jalaluddin (Brothers), Sentu (Mohammedan) and forwards Amin Rana (Sheikh Russel), Milon (Rahmatganj) and Walid (Mohammedan).

Promising players like Himel, Rajib, Rony, Bappi and Masud will provide the team.

At the helm is Asgar Ali Nasir, the man who received high accolades for Khulna Abahani's lively brand of football in the inaugural B. League.

The new Muktijodha coach admitted that the giants have lost much of their strength but his side are stronger than his last year's charges.

"They failed to retain the top players due to financial crisis but it seems to be over. I hope to make a competitive team out of the squad and my team will play rhythmic football," said Nasir.

"I did it with Khulna Abahani and feel confident to do it again

Dhoni rested

FROM PAGE 17

first-class season, scoring 1103 runs in 13 games at 58.05 as he captained Gujarat to victory in the Ranji Trophy Plate League.

"It's a great opportunity," Parthiv told Cricinfo. "I've been performing really well in the last three domestic seasons. At the back of my mind, there was the possibility of me being picked. I know what it takes to be a Test player."

SQUAD FOR SRI LANKA TOUR

Anil Kumble (capt), Virender Sehwaag (vice-capt), Gautam Gambhir, Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Venkatesh Laxman, Sachin Tendulkar, Rohit Sharma, Dinesh Karthik, Parthiv Patel, Harbhajan Singh, Ishant Sharma, Zaheer

Khan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Munaf Patel, Pragyan Ojha.

PRELIMINARY SQUAD FOR CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Virender Sehwaag, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Sachin Tendulkar, Zaheer Khan, Rohit Sharma, Harbhajan Singh, Robin Uthappa, Suresh Raina, Piyush Chawla, Rudra Pratap Singh, Irfan Pathan, Shant Sharma, Praveen Kumar, Manpreet Gony, Pragyan Ojha, Parthiv Patel, Dinesh Karthik, Subramaniam Badrinath, Mohammed Kaif, Manoj Tiwary, Abhishek Nayyar, Pankaj Singh, Murali Kartik, Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajinkya Rahane, Yusuf Pathan, Shanathakumaran Sreesanth.

with the Reds who have the potential to finish among the top four. The Federation Cup is not the target but I think we have enough time to prepare the team for the professional league.

"We will try hard to prove that we still have the material to play good football and that Muktijodha are not a spoiled team. It depends a lot on the coach's planning and approach. We will be there to entertain the crowd for sure but for result, we will need a little bit of luck in addition to good foreign collection."

ICC to pump in more cash

REUTERS, New Delhi

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will pump in around \$300 million (152 million pounds) to develop the game worldwide, the governing body announced on Tuesday.

Haroon Lorgat, CEO of the ICC, described the initiative as "the biggest investment in global development by any sport outside football."

The ICC pledged around \$40 million a year for seven years from 2009 to help its 94 associate and affiliate members, placed below the 10 test-playing teams.

"We want to see results that challenge world cricket's existing order," South African Lorgat, who took charge at the weekend, said in a statement.

"We want to develop better players and structures on and off the field, giving everyone the chance to be the best they can be."

Currently, associates get only rare opportunities to rub shoulders with the elite, mainly at the one-day World Cup. Lorgat said the initiative was possible because of ICC's lucrative commercial deals, particularly the media rights deal signed with ESPN STAR Sports in December 2006 which is reported to be worth around \$1 billion.

3-dayer heads for draw

SPORTS REPORTER

The three-day match between Bangladesh A and England Under-19 was headed for a draw on the third and final day at the Hazelgrave Ground in Loughborough yesterday.

The visitors declared their first innings after reaching 195 for seven, adding 80 to their overnight score of 115-4 and then put the Under-19s in trouble at 94 for five in their first innings.

Paceman Mahbubul Alam snared two early wickets and then his new-ball partner Nazmul Hossain took another. Left-arm spinners Mosharrar Hossain and Suhawardi Shuvo took one wicket each too.

Earlier, Nayeem Islam struck five boundaries and a six as he scored 40 and his overnight batting partner Dhiman Ghosh contributed with 29.

For the hosts, paceman Ben Sanderson took four wickets while the other three went to James Harris, Luke Fletcher and Ian Saxelby.

STANCHART SCHOOL CHESS

Mohona makes good start

SPORTS REPORTER

The Standard Chartered 10th School Chess tournament began with 240 participants at the hall room of Bangladesh Chess Federation yesterday.

The participants include sixteen boys and girls from India and two from Nepal.

They are taking part in the nine-round Swiss League system competition in three groups -- Group A (KG to class V), Group B (Class VI to X) and Group C (girls group).

On the opening day, 27 players earned full points in Group A, 48 in Group B and 13 in the girls section.

Mohona of Motijheel Govt High beat Shiny Das of India in the girls' group.

Tournament sponsors Standard Chartered Bank provided Tk 6 lakh to run the meet, while Tk 1 lakh will be given in prize money.

The competitors of Group B will receive Tk 28,000, Group A Tk 40,000 and Group C Tk 30,000 in prize money apart from trophies.

Referral system to suit India

PTI, Colombo

India have been a victim of wrong umpiring verdicts and the referral system to be trialled during their forthcoming Test series against Sri Lanka will benefit them, feels top legal expert Senaka Weeraratna.

"India will be in a better state of mind to play official cricket matches overseas due to the new umpire referral mechanism, to be introduced during the Indo-Sri Lanka Test series (starting July 23)," Weeraratna, a proponent of the new system for over a decade, told PTI.

"They will not have the fear psychosis of decisions unduly going against them as has happened many a times in the past while playing outside India," said Weeraratna, a former legal consultant to the Sri Lankan Law Commission.

"I wanted the extension of power of the third umpire to rectify any wrong decision of the field umpire by making use of the available technology," he said.

Weeraratna has been advocating the referral of doubtful decisions of field umpires to third umpire for the last 10 years starting with a letter to 'The Australian' in March 1997 and 'London Times' in May 1997.

In June, 1996, he was chosen for the best letter of month from the reputed 'International Cricketer' magazine for his suggestion of two neutral umpires as against then prevailing one home umpire and one third country umpire system.

In another letter written to 'Weekend Australian' on February 20, 1999, under the heading A spectator's appeal: reform cricket umpiring' he suggested the use of compulsory electronic system for umpiring decisions.

Under the new referral system to be trialled during Indo-Lanka series, each team will be permitted to seek review of three decisions of field umpires in each innings and video replays will be used to decide on these appeals.

CA decides on Pak tour in fortnight

REUTERS, Brisbane

Australian cricket officials said on Tuesday they could decide within a fortnight whether or not to pull out of the Champions Trophy in Pakistan because of security concerns.

A bomb blast in the Pakistan capital of Islamabad killed 19 people on the night of the Asia Cup final between Sri Lanka and India in Karachi.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) responded to the blast by threatening to move the Champions Trophy from Pakistan if there were any further threats of violence.

Time to settle scores

Cricket

AFP, London

South African veterans Jacques Kallis and Mark Boucher said Monday they are raring to go for the Test series against England starting Thursday, given their 2-1 loss to their hosts ten years ago and a draw on their last tour in 2003.

Both men said on this occasion they want to make it third time lucky.

"There are three things I really want to achieve: One is beating England in England, a second is beating Australia -- and the third is winning the World Cup," said batsman Kallis.

"We've come close in the past and made some silly mistakes at times when we shouldn't have," Kallis noted.

"This time we hope we can learn from those mistakes and get the foot all the way in through the door, not just half way -- and make sure we play those big moments better than England," he added.

A Marcus Trescothick double

ton helped to bring about a nine-wicket loss at the Oval in 2003 after South Africa had made 484 in their first innings, sticking in Kallis' memory.

But Kallis says this time the tourists are ready to atone.

"We're probably just favourites -- although England being at home maybe makes it pretty much even."

"We've worked hard on our game. Everything we've done in the last year has been towards this series and the Australian one still to come," said Kallis, who said his team would have to try to dismiss England's South Africa-born batsman Kevin Pietersen as early as possible.

"He is obviously a key batsman, who has done well in these conditions. The wickets are quite slow here, and that does suit the way he bats. He's a world-class player who's proven it over the last few years, so we'll have to be on top of our game against him," said Kallis.

"It will be important that we try and attack him early and get him out early."

Pietersen's presence in the England side -- he has an English

mother but was born in Pietermaritzburg -- adds an extra edge to the contest.

But Kallis' fellow 30-something and wicketkeeper Boucher says the tourists totally respect and admire him.

"I respect Kevin as a person and what he's been through," Boucher said, in allusion to Pietersen's decision to represent England given his unhappiness with South Africa's racial quota policy.

"I take my hat off to him, and he's a great player," added Boucher.

"We see him as England's best batter. But come game time, it's about South Africa v England, and we've got to try and get him out."

"Just because it's Kevin, it doesn't make any difference to us. We just want to get an English batter out."

Thursday, weather permitting, should see the start of a four-Test contest with South Africa bidding for their first series win in England since their return from apartheid-enforced isolation.

Aside from the 2003 and 1998 drama, the first post-apartheid series in England ended all square.

Anderson's incentive

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Flintoff might be the one name whose return English cricket is desperate for, but his looming presence isn't wavering James Anderson's focus ahead of the first Test against South Africa.

Flintoff hasn't played for England since the Sydney Test in 2007, but has bowled himself into terrific form for Lancashire this summer after recovering from an ankle surgery in the winter. He was not picked for the first Test at Lord's, though few doubt the selectors will resist the urge to call him up at some point this summer. For Anderson, however, Flintoff's return is regarded "as an extra incentive."

"There's not just Fred (Flintoff) knocking on the door but there's also Steve Harmison, Matthew Hoggard and Simon Jones now back bowling well and players like Sajid (Mahmood) and Liam

Plunkett desperate to get back into the side," he said.

"You've got all these guys taking wickets regularly so you know you've got to keep doing the same if you're going to keep your place. It's not just Fred we're looking over our shoulders at, although he's obviously the biggest of the lot trying to get back. We know he's there but he's a completely different bowler to me so I'm just going to have to continue what I'm doing and if they pick him ahead of me then that's out of my hands."

Though the return of Flintoff is hotly anticipated, sneaking up on the inside is Jones. After moving from Glamorgan to Worcestershire in the winter, he has taken 26 wickets in five Championship games, nudging 90mph. He hasn't played since his key role in the 2005 Ashes and Anderson admitted that he and his colleagues have been keeping a keen eye on the performances of former England bowlers.

"When we're in the dressing room we all look at each other's counties to see how they're getting

on so we all know who's doing well and what other people are doing," he said. "I've been in the same situation as them when I've gone back to Lancashire and I had to bowl well and take wickets consistently for my county to try and get myself back in the team. I've been in their position and I know how they're feeling and how frustrating it is when you can't get back into the team, but all of them who are trying to get back into the team are my mates. I've been on tours and played with them so I hope they do well -- I just hope I do better than them to keep my place."

He added: "We were talking the other day about how the four pace bowlers from the 2005 Ashes are now all back bowling again, fit and taking wickets."

"From mine, Stuart Broad and Ryan Sidebottom's points of view, we're hoping they don't get the chance to bowl again together for England -- if we do keep them out of the team that obviously means we're doing well which has to be a good thing."

'Crank up the pace'

Cricket

AFP, London

South Africa fast bowler 'Morne Morkel has promised to 'crank up' his pace during the upcoming Test series with England.

The Proteas play the first of a four-match series starting at Lord's on Thursday with the 6ft 6in Morkel set to feature after sharp spells in warm-up matches against both Somerset and Middlesex.

In last weekend's match, the 23-year-old needed just six balls to dismiss Andrew Strauss and afterwards the Middlesex and England opener compared Morkel's pace and bounce to that of former Test spearhead Stephen Harmison.

And Morkel was adamant there was more to come once the serious business of the tour got underway.

"When everything is feeling 100 per cent and my rhythm is nice, I'll definitely be trying to crank it up," he said.

Morkel, fit after a hamstring injury cut short his stay with English county Yorkshire feels he is mentally and physically close to his best after returning to the international stage during South Africa's drawn series in India earlier this year.

"The break has helped me," he

said. "India was a stressful time, my comeback series after I got injured in Pakistan (last year).

"I was mentally a bit drained -- but I'm a different man now."

"The ball is coming out quite nicely and it's nice to see the batsmen jumping around a bit. Come Thursday, it will be the England batsmen who are in my sights. I can't wait."

Harmison may have been dropped from England's Test side following a loss of form but he remains an inspiration for Morkel who, in common with the Durham quick, does not believe in giving opposing batsmen too many 'ver-bals'.

"When I was growing up I used to idolise guys like Glenn McGrath, and later on when Steve came to the scene, I also saw myself as bowling like Steve," he said. "I see myself as similar and have watched a lot of tapes of him."

Whereas South African quick Andre Nel is never short of a word for his opponents, Morkel takes the opposite approach. "I use my energy behind the ball rather than to verbally abuse the batsman."

Morkel's methods have impressed wicketkeeper Mark Boucher who has been behind the stumps when South Africa fast bowling greats

Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock have been leading the attack.

"I was standing with the slips, bowling with the wind, and the ball is taking off from a length," Boucher said. "I turned around to Graeme (Smith, the South Africa captain) and said 'thank goodness he's in my side, and I don't have to face him'."

Open squash

FROM PAGE 17 Dhaka Club defeated Karim of Sonargaon Hotel in 2-0 sets respectively while BUET's Jagdish beat Dipak of Dhaka University in 2-1 sets.

In the B Division, Ram of Chittagong Club beat Sumon of Dhaka Club in straight sets. Shahid of Gulshan Club and Commander Jamil also won their respective matches.

China confident

FROM PAGE 17 From July 20, environmental officials remained upbeat about the prospects of clear air for the Olympics.

In Qingdao -- site of the sailing competition 550 kilometres (340 miles) southeast of Beijing -- a pollution-triggered algae bloom has left parts of the harbour covered in a foul-smelling green sludge.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 35 Fire a gun 2 -- En-lal grass 1 Pinnacle 36 Humor 3 Cookies' l 5 Muham- 37 Plump mate 24 Book- 38 Accordion 4 Conclude keeper (Abbr.) 8 Trucker's 41 Brooch 5 Accumu- late 25 Soundful cargo 42 Commer- cials for one don'ts 12 Leno 45 Light 7 Annoy 27 Menag- erie 13 Scratch melody 8 Don't let go, 28 Id 14 Fairy tale 46 Rule whatever counter- part villain 48 Exis- you do 29 "... or 15 Restrain tence, 9 Enthusa- stic -- to 17 Misplace to Caesar 9 Enthusa- stic "be" 19 Work the 10 -- Major 31 Lustrous with weather 11 Ogle 31 Lustrous black 50 Deserve 16 Inter 34 Torched 20 Mystery 51 Mimicry 20 A long, 35 Beach 21 Day 52 Plaything time 37 Mare-to- fractions (Abbr.) 53 Youngster 21 Make sense 38 Entreaty 22 Poker 1 Sore prosthesis 39 Speech problem 23 Cohort of Kirk and Spock 40 Otherwise 26 Dweller 41 Horse- back 30 October 42 Vacation- ing 31 Trot 43 Gloomy 44 'Auld Lang --" 33 Walks like a duck 46 Smack 47 Collector

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-53.

CRYPTOQUIP

L V Q C A K B ' J Q M A E C O K C A K B J

Z X K T D U V K C D Z L Q M X Q J E C O

Z B T T Q J W D A , D J Q A K B

W K E C O I D U S - I D S E C O L K J S ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AT THE SOAPMAKING PLANT, TWO WORKERS FALSELY ACCUSED OF SOMETHING SHOUTED "LYES! ALL LYES!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals R