



Players of both India and England observe two minutes' silence in memory of the dead in the Mumbai terror attacks at the start of the first Test at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

Lewis remanded on drugs charges

AFP, London

Former England all-rounder Chris Lewis has been charged with attempting to smuggle cocaine with a street value of more than 200,000 pounds into Britain.

The 40-year-old was arrested along with an alleged accomplice on Monday after border control officers at London's Gatwick airport found four kilograms (nine pounds) of the illegal drug in liquid form in fruit tins in a baggage that had arrived from the Caribbean island of St Lucia.

Lewis was due to appear at a preliminary court hearing on Tuesday to answer charges which could result in a prison sentence.

Lewis arrived in London on Monday morning on a flight from St Lucia. He was travelling with Chad Kirton, 26, who was also arrested and charged.

Guyana-born Lewis took 93 wickets during his England Test career and 66 wickets in one-day internationals, at averages of 37.5 and 29.4 respectively.

He finished with a Test batting average of 23 but was widely regarded as having failed to live up to the potential of his early years, when he was tipped to become the new Ian Botham.

He retired from county cricket in 2000 because of a persistent hip injury after spells with Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Surrey.

He re-joined Surrey earlier this year with a view to playing in 20-overs matches but that plan was scuppered by injury.

Tour rests on government

CRICINFO, undated

Ijaz Butt, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman, will discuss the future of India's tour to Pakistan during his visit to Chennai for an Asian Cricket Council (ACC) meeting on Friday. Butt has been given clearance to travel to India and is expected to meet BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) officials on the sidelines.

Security concerns in the wake of the Mumbai terror attacks had put the tour -- scheduled to start on January 4 -- in doubt and current political and diplomatic tensions make it highly unlikely.

India's home minister, P Chidambaram, was unequivocal on relations with Pakistan during a speech in Parliament on Thursday, during a discussion of the Mumbai attacks and their fallout. "There is one thing that I wish to make clear: Given the nature of the threat, we cannot go back to 'business as usual'," he said.

PCB officials, however, are working on the issue. "The Indo-Pak series is not on the agenda of the ACC meeting but it is a good platform to have direct talks with Indian officials," Saleem Altaf, the PCB's chief operating officer, told PTI. "The matter is in the hands of two governments and we can't do anything. But yes, playing at neutral venues is also an option that can be discussed in Chennai."

Altaf said he held talks with Indian and Australian officials during the ICC chief executives' meeting in Cape Town last week. Both teams are slated to tour the country -- Australia had postponed their visit in 2008 because of security concerns and are now scheduled to tour next April.

"Both of them, BCCI secretary N Srinivasan and (Cricket Australia chief executive) James Sutherland, said they had sent the tour itinerary for approval to their relevant government ministries and were awaiting clearance," he said.

Counties' warning

CRICINFO, undated

English counties who lose centrally contracted players to the Indian Premier League (IPL) next year will seek compensation, which may have to come from the pockets of the players themselves.

The two teams likely to be affected are Hampshire and Lancashire with Kevin Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff both believed to be very close to signing IPL contracts. Pietersen plays his domestic cricket for Hampshire -- although he has made just 10 appearances in the last three seasons -- and Flintoff has been with Lancashire throughout his career. While neither county appears likely to stand in the way of the players taking IPL deals, they want some compensation for letting them go.

"Some people think that because a player has a central contract the county doesn't have anything to do with him any more," Hampshire chair-

man Rod Bransgrove told the Guardian. "The England management might like to think that that is the case. But it's not."

"England are entitled to play Kevin and they are entitled to rest him. But they can't permit him to play for another team in the course of the domestic cricket season. Any centrally contracted player must have permission from his county if he intends to play in the IPL. And in Kevin's case that's Hampshire."

"I'm prepared to negotiate but if any team wants Kevin to play for them in the course of the county season the franchise concerned would have to reach an agreement with us."

The problem this creates is that IPL franchises don't factor in any compensation requirements when they bid for a player. It is an issue unique to English counties because it is the only domestic season running parallel with the IPL.

Pietersen has reportedly received a 1.7 million dollars offer to play, but may have to pay Hampshire from his

contract. Even though Pietersen is a centrally contracted player that only allows the ECB jurisdiction over England and county duty, not whether he can play for another team.

The participation of England's centrally contracted players in the IPL has led to lengthy negotiations between the players, board and Professional Cricketers' Association. Contracts have yet to be signed as the final details, especially relating to players being released, are ironed out.

Jim Cumbes, the chief executive at Lancashire, hopes compensation will come from the franchise rather than Flintoff. "The last thing we want to do is stop Freddie making money in the IPL. Good luck to him. But we will be seeking compensation if he does play. The county season will be under way by then."

"No figure has been mentioned. It might be 10 per cent of his contract. And we would prefer it to come from the franchise, rather than the player's pocket."

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Australian cricket legend Shane Warne on Wednesday threw his support behind a musical stage show that presents a warts-and-all account of his controversy-laced career.

The bowler lashed out at the show's producers when they announced plans for "Shane Warne -- The Musical" earlier this year, believing they should have sought his permission before proceeding.

But Warne said he decided to see the musical for himself before it opened in his hometown of Melbourne this week and was pleasantly surprised at the tenor of the production starring comedian Eddie Perfect as the wayward spinner.

"I think Eddie and his team have written the musical in a respectful and sympathetic way, and that they have captured my fun, larrikin (lovable rogue) side," Warne wrote in the Herald Sun newspaper Wednesday.

The show has been promoted as "a new breed of Aussie music theatre that smokes, drinks, carries a few extra kilos and still brings home the Ashes."

With songs such as "What an SMS I'm In," it does not shy away from the sex, betting, drug and mobile phone scandals that plagued Warne during a stellar career that saw him take 708 Test wickets, the second highest tally in history.

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week that the show was in many ways a tribute to a larger-than-life cricketer whose career had all the elements of an opera.

Warne said his initial misgivings centred on a fear that it would be peppered with "cheap gags" and he was particularly concerned about the way his ex-wife Simone and mother Brigitte would be portrayed.

The spinner, who retired from international cricket in January last year, said his friends and management persuaded him that the only way to make an informed decision about the musical was to see it himself.

His management arranged for him to attend a preview and, true to form, Warne said he steered himself with a few beers before watching the performance from the back row of the theatre.

"I am suddenly very nervous. More edgy, even, than facing Pakistani quickie Shoaib Akhtar on a green, seaming deck, I reckon," Warne said of his feelings at seeing his life depicted on stage.

The 39-year-old said the show's opening sequences were funny, even though it was "weird" watching actors recreate his early career.

He admitted his apprehension mounted as the show approached its second half, which deals with the scandals that faced Warne at the height of his on-field prowess.

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Zaheer in hot water

INTERNET, undated

Tamil Nadu Police have lodged a complaint with the Indian team management against pace spearhead Zaheer Khan for breaching security guidelines and getting into an argument with guards at the team hotel.

Zaheer was miffed with security officials after one of his friends was denied entry into the hotel on Tuesday, police sources said.

The paceman came down from his room and got into an argument with the security personnel who prevented his friend from entering the hotel since his name was not in the list of approved guests.

Zaheer's friend, a Tamil Nadu cricketer, was eventually allowed to enter the hotel but only after being thoroughly frisked which angered the bowler even more.

Taking a serious view of the incident, the Tamil Nadu Police have complained to the Indian team management and the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association, the organisers of the first Test between India and England.

CRICINFO, undated

Hashim Amla ensured a productive opening to the South Africans' tour of Australia with an unbeaten hundred against Western Australia, but the tourists received another injury when the fast bowler Morne Morkel hurt his ankle.

With Graeme Smith (elbow), Dale Steyn (hamstring) and Paul Harris (thumb) not playing at the WACA, Morkel added more concern with a mild sprain that will rule him out of the two-day game starting on Friday.

Morkel is one of the hyped fast-bowling trio along with Steyn and Makhaya Ntini, but he should have enough time to recover before Wednesday's first Test. He was called for the 11th over and did not make it through his first delivery before hobbling off the ground for treatment.

The batting situation was much better for the South Africans, with Amla and Jacques Kallis spending some quality time familiarising themselves with the pitch. Having won the toss, the visitors were 2 for 41 after JP Duminy (16) edged Brett Dorey to first slip, following Neil McKenzie's nick behind for 4.

Treating the innings like it was a Test, Amla and Kallis began cautiously as they found their feet. Kallis expanded after

spending 48 balls posting double figures and was unbeaten on 52, with five fours and two sixes, at the end of their 50 overs. Amla was more aggressive in striking 15 boundaries during his 105 from 118 balls. Ashwell Prince, the stand-in captain, and Mark Boucher did not get a chance as the tourists reached 2 for 185.

For the record, Western Australia finished 20 ahead at the end of the day and sealed a seven-wicket win, but the fixture was more about match practice for the South Africans before their three Tests in three weeks. Ntini delivered 10 overs without a wicket while Lonwabo Tsotsobe and Monde Zondeki also had useful hit-outs. Tsotsobe picked up 1 for 12 off ten overs while Zondeki had 1 for 46 off nine.

Both teams used 12 men, there were no limitations on the number of overs that a bowler could have and no fielding restrictions. Western Australia also continued to bat after passing the visitors' total, finishing with 4 for 215 in their 50 overs. Adam Voges top scored with 87 of 78 balls, with 12 fours and two sixes, and David Bandy was unbeaten on 53.

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SOUTH AFRICANS: 185-2 in 50 overs (Amla 105 not out, Kallis 52 not out)
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A report in 'The Australian' said senior Australian players are uncertain about going to India in the near future and player managers have also expressed concern.

Australian vice-captain Michael Clarke said security was one of the issues he had to weigh up when considering signing for the second edition of the IPL next year.

"I have a lot of things to consider. I have to think about the amount of cricket, I am trying to plan a wedding as well and I have to think about what I have to think about recently," said Clarke who did not join an IPL franchise this year and is yet to make up his mind about entering the Twenty20 event's second season next year.

"I am going to play this Test series (against South Africa) and then I can sit down with Lara (his fiancée) and my family and make a decision. I certainly would love to be part of the IPL, but it is a matter of timing. If I am right to go I will look forward to that," he added.

The report said other Australian players also said the terror attacks on the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai, where they had stayed many times, had created anxiety about returning for IPL in April-May next year.

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Often different parties view the same situation differently. One of the issues that particularly grated with Pakistan over the postponement of the Champions Trophy was that the report of the ICC-hired security firm was overlooked in favour of Reg Dickason's report, compiled for Australia, New Zealand and England. Both, it is said, held contrasting views, but it was Dickason's negative assessment in the end that held sway.

The only rational way of avoiding this discrepancy, to eliminate as much doubt, is for the ICC to appoint one security firm approved by all its members, which would make all future security assessments. To ensure that the method of assessing risk is standard, or less ad-hoc than it is now, won't stop tour cancellations. But it might erode suspicions of double standards, heal some of cricket's rifts, and leave affected members with little scope for complaint. In this strange, shapeless war, that will be a little battlewon.

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And what of Pakistan?

CRICINFO, undated

England's return has emphasised that cricket currently begins and ends, and breathes and earns in between, in India.

It says much about cricket's current money-just that it has taken the horrors of Mumbai, an attack at the very financial heart of a country and an entire sport, for people to wake up to the problem. Only the prospect of India being unable to bring untold fortunes into players' pockets has prompted men such as Tim May, head of the global players' union, to talk of solutions, talk conspicuously absent as Pakistan suffered.

Pakistan can rightly feel aggrieved and unwanted. That sense will not be lessened by the realisation that the security situation in both countries is different enough to perhaps warrant different responses.

At least it is very much seen to be different: the Mumbai attacks rightly leave India a victim of terror, but suicide attacks in Pakistan leave it a victimless hub of terror. There is truth to the perception, though Pakistani victims are plentiful, and to deny the problem in Pakistan is blind and dangerous. But details are missed: that cricket hasn't been targeted and that attacks have mostly hit state and military targets. Ultimately it hardly matters, for a bomb in India will do the same as a bomb in Pakistan.

But some hope can be drawn from England's decision. A precedent has been set, one Pakistan will use next time they are hosts: "If you came to India, why not to Pakistan?" Sadly for Pakistan, much of the basis for that hope rests on the ICC, an organisation traditionally possessed of the backbone of a jellyfish, the moral substance of a loan shark, and a collective nose less than that of the three stooges.

Terrorism is not going

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Warne accepts musical

CRICINFO, undated

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