

Tresco's no to Strauss

CRICINFO, undated

Marcus Trescothick, the former England opener, says he has turned down a request from Andrew Strauss...

"After taking everything into consideration, I reluctantly had to tell Strauss that playing for England again was just not possible..."

"Playing cricket for England was the great ambition of my life and, until I became ill, I loved everything about it..."



Lleyton Hewitt of Australia is ecstatic after defeating Evgeny Korolev of Russia in the US Men's Clay Court Championships semifinal in Houston on Saturday.

Hewitt breaks clay jinx

Tennis

AFP, Houston

Lleyton Hewitt of Australia reached his first clay court final in a decade with a 7-6, 6-4 victory over Evgeny Korolev of Russia at the US Men's Clay Court Championships on Saturday.

until the final game of the second set, when Korolev fell behind love-40 and lost on the first match point with a backhand that sailed past the baseline.

Hewitt faced no break points in the match and gained control of the first-set tiebreaker on four straight errors by the Russian.

Korolev upset Argentina's Guillermo Canas in a long three-setter on Friday.

Odesnik will be trying to become the first American to win a clay court event since 2006 when Mardy Fish won here.

Odesnik faced little drama until the sixth game of the second set, when he led 5-1. Phau fought off the first match point with a forehand winner.

Waqar doubts

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It means country was not dear to you before (joining the ICL). Ex-Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq leads the Lahore Badshahs team in the ICL, which is made up of Pakistani players and won the event last year.

Last Tuesday, the Pakistan Cricket Board pulled Nazir, Naved and Razaq out of an enlarged national squad for the World Twenty20, just a day after having included them illustrating the confusion of the status of ICL players.

Younis retired after the 2003 World Cup with an impressive record of 373 wickets in 87 Test matches and 416 scalps from 262 one-day internationals.

Fergie draws

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that he will give goals away because of the player he is, I speak to him about it. I don't accept that from anyone.

"In European football, if you give the ball away it takes a long time to get it back."

"He always feels he's not getting the proper protection from referees and I think that, maybe, in quite a few cases he is right, and a few cases he is not right."

"It's hard when a player who wants to entertain doesn't get everything his own way. But you can't get everything your own way."

"He understands that and there's not a problem with that. It's just a frustration that he feels he doesn't get the decision and he gets upset about it."

"I think, obviously, he doesn't enjoy that and he knows he's letting himself down more than anything."

"He holds his hands up. I have had to remind him about that but I'm not getting into what has been said."

Macheda

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claimed that Macheda was simply confirming that he's a natural goal poacher.

The United manager said: "The boy has got something special about him. I haven't seen the goal again but one of the players told me that he tried it deliberately and sidefooted it in."

"He's quick thinking and goalscorers have that quality. He's got the instinct."

Bashundhara

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"I first want to thank Bashundhara for coming forward to sponsor football at the district level where there was almost no football in organised form due to lack of sponsorship and I hope district football will again get its life back through this sponsorship."

The lands which BFF will be granted are estimated at a value of above Tk 200 crore with the residential area ground being targeted as the BFF training ground and the Riverview land has been planned for the mini stadium.

National Sports Council chairman (NSC) and Army

Chief General Moeen U Ahmed, who was also present, told during the signing ceremony that football was born again in Bangladesh through last month's Citycell Super Cup and the players and crowds are starting to enjoy the game although more work needs to be done.

"I have seen great excitement amongst the players and the public about football recently and I would like to see this kind of excitement on a more national and international level. And, there is no doubt that our country's football needs a permanent training facility. My aim as the chairman of NSC is to maximise facilities for all sports bodies," said Gen Moeen.

Series win

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squad for the UAE series. Disciplinary and fitness problems restricted him to playing just two ODIs since November 2007, both against the visiting Sri Lankan team in January this year. It was the same opposition he played his last Twenty20 international against, in King City, in October last year.

"Nobody can give a guarantee of fitness in international matches, but I have come into the side after passing a fitness test," he said. "I want to bowl my full quota of 10 overs and enjoy fielding."

Australia have rested three players for the series -- captain Ricky Ponting, Michael Hussey and Mitchell Johnson -- while Shane Watson, Andrew

Symonds and Brett Lee have been recalled.

"Ponting is a great player and so is Hussey, they will surely be missed," Akhtar said. "But Australia have some very good players like Shaun Marsh and Michael Clarke but if our bowlers bowl to their potential, we have a chance to win the series."

He also backed captain Younis Khan, who replaced Shoib Malik in January after Sri Lanka defeated Pakistan 2-1 in the three-match ODI series. "Younis is a very popular man in the dressing room. He does work very hard and leads from the front," Akhtar said. "His captaincy is the best thing that has happened to Pakistan and I am very happy with him."

SA go for the series

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period of about 20 balls before cutting loose and he is keen to make the most of his strong form while it lasts.

It is rare that Nathan Bracken has two poor one-day internationals in a row but three in succession is almost unheard of. And yet that is the case for the man who has slipped down to fifth on the ICC ODI bowling rankings.

Australia have added the Victorian Shane Harwood to their squad for this match, calling him over from the Rajasthan Royals' camp and he may replace Ben Laughlin in the starting line-up.

Harwood, 35, played Australia's two Twenty20 internationals late last month in South Africa before being sent home. Brett Lee and Stuart Clark will both be in Port Elizabeth when the match is played but neither will come into contention.

Lee is training there with his IPL side and doesn't officially join the ODI squad until the series

in the UAE, while Clark will have only just arrived. "Stuart Clark will meet us in Johannesburg ahead of the fifth and final one-day international in Johannesburg on Friday, said team spokesman Philip Pope.

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Herschelle Gibbs, Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers, Jacques Kallis, JP Duminy, Vaughn van Jaarsveld, Mark Boucher, Roelof van der Merwe, Albie Morkel, Morne Morkel, Johan Botha, Dale Steyn, Wayne Parnell, Makhaya Ntini.

AUSTRALIA (from): Michael Clarke, Brad Haddin, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Hussey, David Hussey, Callum Ferguson, Marcus North, James Hopes, Cameron White, Mitchell Johnson, Nathan Hauritz, Stuart Clark, Nathan Bracken, Shane Harwood, Ben Laughlin.

BFF ready

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Babul was also confident that the National Club Championship will start by the second week of next month.

"We have set a date for a May 6 start but it could be delayed for a couple of days," said Babul, chairman of the competition.

A total of 60 teams have entered the club competition for districts where five teams will play in league format at 12 venues. The winners will qualify for the finals with three teams forming four groups. The four group champions will play in home and away semifinals for a place in the final.

The only problem for the Tk 48-lakh tournament is that the BFF has yet to find a sponsor.

The qualifying venues are: Gazipur, Gopalganj, Sherpur, Feni, Bandarban, Habiganj, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jessore, Barguna and Meherpur.

PCL from April

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formers, umpires and instructed some directions.

He said a total of eight teams would contest the tournament. "Already six teams Mohammedan Sporting Club, Brothers Union, Continental Group, Ispahani Group, Laxmipur Rider and Noakhali DSA registered formally," Abbas said.

An auction of around 60 cricketers may take place and there also will be the option for the participating teams to choose sponsors.

PCL chairman AZM Nasir said that they will sit in Chittagong in day or two to discuss in details about the preparations of PCL.

IPL to give up a few boxes

CRICINFO, undated

The Indian Premier League (IPL) is set to make its second major concession in a week, with executives close to a compromise with the South African provinces over the allocation of corporate suites.

The dispute over corporate suites had prompted several South African newspapers to speculate that the IPL could be cancelled. That, though, appears unlikely, with officials from both countries eager to reach a compromise.

"We are all facing a big challenge. We are hosting the biggest cricket tournament in the world in ten days time. There were always going to be certain issues, but I think all parties have done a good job of working through those so the tournament can go ahead."

Gerald Majola, the chief executive of Cricket South Africa (CSA), was similarly confident that the dispute over corporate suites would be resolved.

"CSA will look to uphold the interest and rights of all stakeholders," Majola said in a statement. "Discussions are in the final stages of an amicable resolution for all parties concerned and CSA is confident that this matter will be settled soon."

Should Indian executives agree to fewer corporate suites, it would be the IPL's second major back down in a week. The IPL relaxed the prohibitive terms and conditions it had placed on non-rights holding media on Thursday, prompting major news agencies, including Reuters and Associated Press, to end their boycott of the tournament.

Warne

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Khan bowled just one over in the Royals' losing warm-up game against the Cape Cobras in Cape Town on Saturday but surprised Cobras captain and South African international batsman Justin Ontong with a fast yorker which scattered Ontong's stumps.

The only run he conceded was a wide and Warne reckoned he had seen enough, taking Khan out of the attack to see how other bowlers fared.

Amit Singh, 27, from Gujarat, was also impressive, taking three for 18 in four overs and frequently deceiving the local batsmen with his slower ball.

When the Royals launch their defence against Bangalore's Royal Challengers on Saturday Warne will also be able to call on Indian Test player Munaf Patel.

In the meantime, Warne says his biggest immediate challenge is to trim the current 27-man squad to 18 players.

Jose confident

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But Inter midfielder Esteban Cambiasso said his side would not be going to Turin to settle for a point.

"We will take to the pitch with one thing in mind: winning. It's a match that every one's been waiting for, both us and our fans because this is a direct title clash," he said.

Terry pleads

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But Terry played down those claims. He said: "Listen, Jose was a great manager and had some great times here. But it's someone else's turn now to kick on."

"Mourinho is a world class manager, a lot of the players are still in contact with him. But we need stability at the club now. The manager's done brilliantly and got us playing freely. But it's down to the board to make those decisions."

Chelsea remain in touch with Manchester United in the Premier League title race after Saturday's 4-3 win over Bolton kept them four points behind the leaders.

Although Chelsea need United to slip up twice to overhaul the champions, Terry is convinced they are firmly in contention.

Flintoff awaiting IPL

CRICINFO, undated

INTERNET, undated

Andrew Flintoff does not believe playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL) will have a detrimental effect on his performances for England because of the amount of cricket he has missed in the last year.

The 31-year-old has had several niggling injuries, the latest of which was a hip problem that ruled him out of the final Test and first two one-day internationals in the West Indies.

Despite having often struggled to stay fit, Flintoff became the joint highest paid player in the IPL when Chennai Super Kings successfully bid 1.5 million dollars for his services, and he is not worried taking part will jeopardise his condition ahead of England's home series against West Indies and Australia.

It has been suggested Flintoff should be wrapped in cotton wool ahead of the Ashes this summer, but the all-rounder told Radio Five Live's Sportsweek: "I don't know about that."

"I have missed so much cricket through injury that I don't want to miss any more."

"I've not played a lot of Twenty20 cricket and I'd like to play more. I'm not saying the money is not very appealing, but there's a lot more to it. I spent several weeks working very hard at my fitness when I came back from the West Indies and, hopefully, that will stand me in good stead come the summer."

Other England players, notably Kevin Pietersen, have said the rigours of a long winter away have taken their toll, and Graeme Swann even likened the events of the last few months to an episode of Eastenders.

Flintoff's Caribbean tour may have been interrupted by injury but he was involved in the debates following the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and he insists missing home is normal.

"It's been a tough winter all round," he said. "Going to India before Christmas with everything that happened, and coming home and going back, was testing for everyone."

"There have been lots of things going on. These are long tours. We are proud to play for England but people have got things at home as well and families who you desperately miss when you're away."

"When you come to the end of a trip, of course people are looking forward to getting home and seeing people you haven't seen for a long time."

Flintoff has been tipped to captain England in the Twenty20 World Cup but he remained tight-lipped on the subject, adding: "I've not thought about it a great deal."

"It'd be something I'd have to think about and see if I could be the best man for the job. I don't think many people would turn it down."

Andy made permanent?

CRICINFO, undated

INTERNET, undated

England are expected to unveil Andy Flower as their team director this week.

Flower is believed to have been interviewed by a panel chaired by Hugh Morris, the managing director of the England team, last week and if the details of a contract worth about £250,000 can be agreed he should be confirmed in his position by Wednesday.

The team director's first task will be to help select a squad for the first Test against West Indies on May 6, a selection that Geoff Miller, the national selector, says needs finalising by Saturday.

The first Test squad underpins strategy for the Ashes so needs more than cursory consideration. Several England players, including Andrew Flintoff, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Ravi Bopara and Owais Shah, depart for the Indian Premier League on Tuesday and need to know if they must return by

May 1, the deadline for those chosen for the first Test.

Hugh Morris knows that I want to pick the initial Test squad by next Saturday and knows that the team director has got to be involved in picking that squad," Miller said yesterday. "The sooner we get this deal in situ the better. Time is tight. The selectors will also choose an England Lions team to face the West Indians on April 30. A captain for the World Twenty20 may come later."

Flower is the only man known to have made Morris's "very short shortlist". Several high-calibre candidates made known they were no longer in the process, if indeed they were ever in it. These include Tom Moody, Gary Kirsten, Micky Arthur and Graham Ford. Ashley Giles was told he lacked experience.

If Flower is the man, his blueprint will involve greater levels of fitness and stricter regimes for players between tours. What he cannot much control is England's cricketers playing pretty much non-stop for the 11 weeks leading up to the Ashes on July 8, while all the

Australians enjoy a minimum four-week break at some point.

Considering that injuries have habitually hampered England's Ashes campaigns during nine defeats in 10 series -- the exception was 2005, when they won -- they might have learnt their lesson.

Instead, England's top players are bound for three weeks chasing the IPL dollar, then go straight into three weeks of matches against West Indies while the Australians rest before a marathon tour of England that takes in the World Twenty20, the Ashes and seven ODIs. The core of the team -- Ricky Ponting, Mike Hussey, Michael Clarke, Mitchell Johnson and Brad Haddin -- will have nothing to do with the IPL.

Ponting, Hussey and Johnson also sit out one-day series against Pakistan in the Middle East in which Brett Lee begins his return from injury. Stuart Clark, also on the comeback trail, was yesterday called up for the remaining ODIs in South Africa. If he is retained for the Pakistan series it could jeopardise what is left of his six-week spell at Kent.

Proteas reaping the benefits: AB

CRICINFO, undated

INTERNET, undated

AB de Villiers says South Africa's success in the one-day format is a result of the momentum built up in all forms of the game over the last two years.

The Proteas took a 2-1 series lead against Australia on Thursday night at Newlands to close in on back-to-back one-day series victories over their biggest rivals following a 4-1 success down under earlier this year.

"We played very good one-day cricket in Australia," reflected de Villiers on Saturday. "We have actually been playing very good cricket for the last two years."

"We have got a nice brand of cricket going and we are playing at a very high level in terms of our skills. Everybody knows their role in the team and exactly what is expected from them."

"We have the home crowd behind us and we have a bit of momentum going for us, so we would like to finish the series off here in Port Elizabeth."

South Africa's recent success has lifted them to the summit of the one-day rankings, and they recently received a cheque for 175,000 dollars for topping the rankings on April 1.

However de Villiers insists that the billing was not a specific goal and rather a welcome result of taking it one game at a time.

"We are not really focused on that," he said of the ranking. "We have got our own standards that we like to set and the goals that we want to achieve. Obviously, if we win this game -- which is one of our goals -- we will maintain the No. 1 spot."

De Villiers has carried his good form during the Test series through to the one-day internationals, and has averaged 59 at a strike rate of 87 in the opening three matches.

"I have been in good form for a while now and it is important that you cash in when you have the form," he muses.

"You must never take it for granted and I will keep working hard at my game. I will follow the same game plan as normal: nice and tight for the first 20 balls and start to express myself a bit after that."

Royals lose warm-up

AFP, Cape Town

Shane Warne's Rajasthan Royals made a losing start to their South African campaign when they lost by 27 runs against the Cape Cobras in an Indian Premier League warm-up match at Newlands Saturday.

Both teams were well below strength, with the Royals fielding only four of the players who won the IPL last year and the Cobras missing most of the men who won the South African Twenty20 final earlier in the season.

"It's disappointing to lose but it was a great opportunity for some of the guys to show what they can do," said Warne. "Everything we wanted to get out of this game we got although the batting was a bit disappointing."

Opening bowler Amit Singh bowled impressively to take three for 15 as the Cape Cobras made 142 for eight.

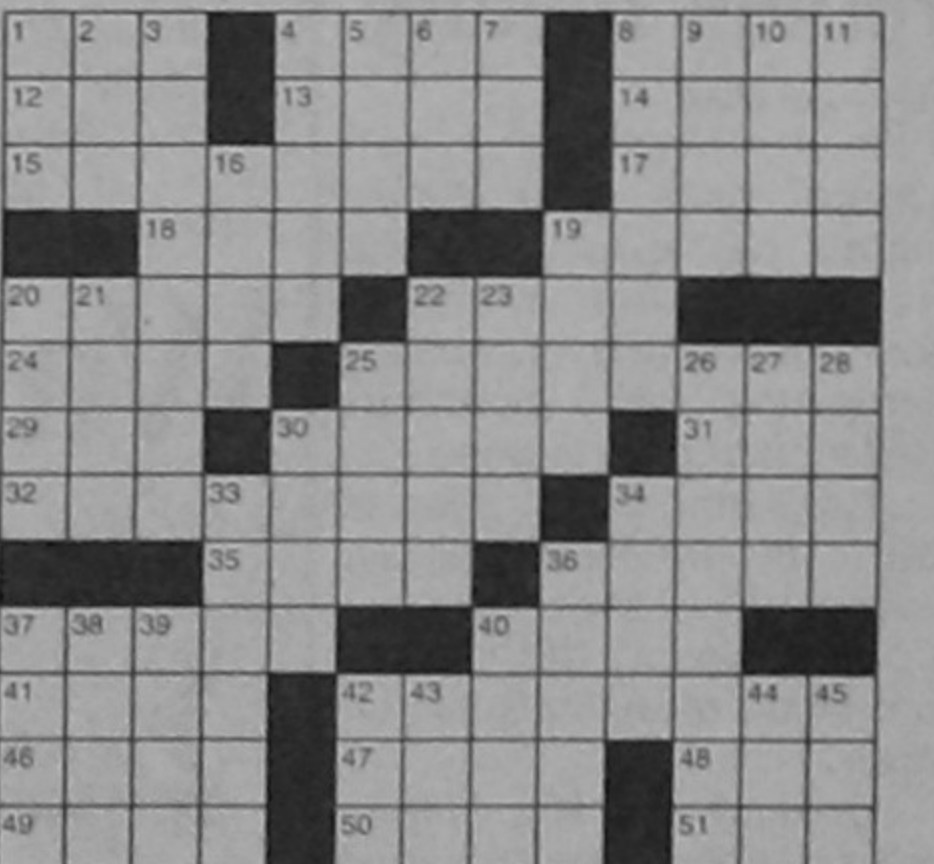
The home side were struggling at 34 for four and 65 for five but prospered through some hard hitting by lower order batsmen Richard Levi (36), Vernon Philander (26) and Rory Kleinveldt (23).

Kleinveldt took four for 34 when the Royals batted to clinch the man of the match award.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Table of crossword clues: ACROSS 34 Grouch partner nation, 1 Poka coaster, 4 Prospect's speciality, hope 37 Cash recipient, 8 Rainout spread, 12 Have bills, 13 Basin accessory, 14 Disturb, 15 California campus, 17 'Do' others, 18 Show bad aim, 19 Devoutness, 20 Paratrooper's need, 22 Palette selections, 24 Slush like, 25 Lobk constellation, 29 Altar, 30 Puglist, 31 Wet wiggler, 32 Con-temptible.

Table of crossword answers: 20 African nation, 31 Take on a spell, 23 Second-hand, 25 Got up German capitalist?, 27 Breach of secrecy, 28 Exile isle, 30 Acronymy, 34 Pop choice, 36 Of punishment request, 38 Largest of the seven, 39 Tug hard or Barry more, 42 Inlet, 43 Historic Japanese pond, 44 Japanese carp, 45 Conclusion.



CRYPTOQUIP ITFI LZHXUFS YFSQOFBIQDUSX NHFSI NDWCQBUSX TFUDDLQRTZR RTWQHC SFYZ UIRZHO "LDQRRZR LDRIRZR." Yesterday's Cryptogram: A POPULAR TUNE ABOUT EVENINGS SPENT ON A SANDY BEACH COULD BE CALLED "I LOVE A GRAINY NIGHT" Today's Cryptogram Clue: I equals T