

Lee unlikely for Ashes

PTI, Melbourne

With the pace of his recovery rather slow, Australian pacer Brett Lee could be left out of the squad for the Ashes Series against England in July.

According to a report in the 'Herald Sun' quoting sources, Lee is currently only 70 per cent fit after undergoing foot and ankle surgery in January.

"High-placed Australian sources insist Lee is behind schedule in his recovery from foot and ankle surgery, and it would not be the shock of the century if he was overlooked for the Ashes," the newspaper said.

Lee was picked for the ongoing one-day series against Pakistan but the slow pace of his recovery meant that the 32-year-old had to be replaced at the last moment.

Selectors, who will pick the Ashes squad next month, feel it would be too big a risk to take an untested Lee to Ashes.

"Australian selection boss Andrew Hilditch had wanted Lee on deck for Australia's one-day series against Pakistan, which started last night in Dubai, to assess his form and fitness before the marquee tour of England," the report said.

Lee is currently in South Africa undergoing rehabilitation and training with his Indian Premier League team Kings Punjab XI.

Keep selectors' faith, Clarke tells Symonds

PTI, Melbourne

Australia's stand-in captain Michael Clarke thinks Andrew Symonds owes a debt to national selectors for choosing him for the one-dayers against Pakistan despite a poor domestic form and off-field controversies and now he should repay it by strong performance.

Symonds had undergone counselling to deal with a series of off-field controversies including the gone-fishing episode, Brisbane pub brawl and using of crude language on Kiwi Brendon McCullum. He had also undergone knee surgery in between.

Symonds averaged just 15.5 with the bat for Queensland Bulls in eight first-class matches and struggled for runs in the one-day domestic competition, but Clarke expects the talented all-rounder to justify his selection.

"He comes into the group as every other player that walks back into the team. Cricket Australia have made it clear that he was right to come back and as captain I've tried to make him as welcome as possible. I know all the other guys have as well. He'll be treated like everybody else."

"They (selectors) have shown faith on him by re-selecting him for this tour. Everybody knows he's a wonderful player when he's playing his best cricket," Clarke said.

North Bengal

FROM PAGE 17

Left-arm spinner Al-Amin took three wickets for Wari.

At the City Club ground, East End Club (216 all out) defeated Dhanmondi Cricket Academy (156 all out) by 60 runs. Sohag struck 52 while Fakrul took four wickets for the winners.

Injured Marsh

FROM PAGE 17

remaining games in the United Arab Emirates and therefore a decision has been made to send him home immediately in order to begin his recovery.

"Shaun's recovery process will be monitored over the next two weeks before any decision can be made on his availability for the upcoming ICC World Twenty in the United Kingdom."

Andrew Hilditch, the chairman of selectors, said it was a huge setback for Marsh but a good opportunity for North, given his all-round talents. "This is very disappointing for Shaun particularly given how hard he was worked in his recovery from the previous injury. While Marcus has been chosen primarily as a top-order batsman, his offspin bowling will come in particularly handy in the conditions the team will face both in Dubai and Abu Dhabi."

North is currently in England as Hampshire's overseas player but will leave the current Championship match against Warwickshire and head to Dubai. He hit the headlines when he made a hundred on Test debut in Johannesburg against South Africa in February.



PHOTO: AFP

Deccan Chargers captain Adam Gilchrist takes aerial route during his rapid 71 off 45 balls against Bangalore Royal Challengers in the Indian Premier League match at Newlands in Cape Town on Wednesday.

Strong statements

CRICINFO, undated



The wisdom ahead of this tournament as experts tried to compare and contrast Indian conditions with those in South Africa was that the new ball was going to be crucial. Here, finally, would be the chance for Indian Premier League seamers to get their own back after last year's succession of subcontinental shirt-fronts left them desperately searching for creases and rivets. And it's true: the new ball has indeed been crucial. Just not in the way people expected.

Wednesday night's blast-from-the-past 71 in 45 balls by Adam Gilchrist, who added 46 for Deccan Chargers' first wicket with Herschelle Gibbs in only 3.5 overs, continued a mini-trend that may persuade fast bowlers it really is a batsman's game after all. And it didn't take Gilchrist long to make the point either: he pulled Praveen Kumar's second ball of the match for four, curved the third off the back foot through the covers for four more, then cut the fourth raspingly for another boundary. The all-important momentum seemed to have swung early - and decisively.

The Gilchrist-Gibbs combination is not the only opening pair capable of reducing grown men to gibbering wrecks. On Sunday, Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir biffed 58 in 4.5 overs to win a rain-affected match against Kings XI Punjab in Cape Town. The following evening in Port Elizabeth, Matthew Hayden and Parthiv Patel had butchered 106 by the time they were separated in the 11th over. Yesterday in Durban, Brendon McCullum and Chris Gayle merrily put on 57 inside six overs to unwittingly ensure a D/L-assisted win over poor old Punjab.

Even before that, we had Sachin Tendulkar and Sanath Jayasuriya beginning the tournament with a sensible 39, not to mention Ravi Bopara and Karan Goel adding a forgotten 67 inside six overs for Kings XI Punjab the next day. The idea that the extra life in South African pitches would at least spare the new-ball bowlers a battering, is fighting for its life.

With that in mind, Gilchrist may not have been the batsman Kumar, Dale Steyn, Jacques Kallis or anyone else for that matter wanted to bowl to. Gilchrist hasn't played top-flight cricket since the first IPL, where he managed 436 runs at an average of 33 and a strike-rate of 137 - respectable figures in a losing Deccan team. The word was his only game between then and the start of this year's tournament was a Twenty20 match in aid of the Australian bush-fire appeal. Even so, the aura lives on.

After that opening salvo against Kumar, Gilchrist cut Steyn twice for four, then helped him back over his head for a straight six with the ease of a man peeling a banana. After two overs, Deccan had 27 on the board and the contribution of Gibbs was a single. Soon after Kallis disappeared onto the sight screen at the Wynberg End, and had to crick his neck again next ball as Gilchrist spanked him straight down the ground for four.

A pull for six off Jesse Ryder brought up a curuscating 31-ball half-century, which was duly celebrated with six more over wide mid-on. And when Gilchrist advanced on Anil Kumble, who adjusted his line at last moment, the result was an improvised whip over midwicket for the six that brought up Deccan's 100. With Australia crumbling today to 168 in Abu Dhabi against Pakistan, it was not difficult to come over all nostalgic.

The end came courtesy of a stunningly nonchalant catch by Virat Kohli at short extra cover as Gilchrist looked to launch Kevin Pietersen for another boundary, but then it was always going to take something special to stop him. And although Fidel Edwards hit back for the new-ball brethren by knocking over Ryder with a gorgeous inswinging yorker as Bangalore began their reply, that simply highlighted the excellence of what had gone before. And it showed Edwards' fast-bowling comrades that invention and daring will be needed as this tournament progresses if the shine isn't going to disappear off the new ball more quickly than the smile off Ryder's face.

India's most successful Test captain Sourav Ganguly was replaced at the helm of Kolkata Knight Riders by New Zealander Brendon McCullum, a move masterminded by their cricket head, former Australian coach John Buchanan.

Rahul Dravid was dumped as captain of Bangalore Royal Challengers after Kevin Pietersen came on board this year while Venkatesai Laxman was sacked as skipper of Deccan Chargers in favour of Adam Gilchrist.

When Pietersen leaves the IPL in early-May due to England commitments, South African Jacques Kallis will take over as captain for the rest of the season.

Wadekar said he wished Indian coaches were taken on by the rich owners. "Some of the foreign coaches have not even played Test cricket, that's why they don't know how to respect talent at the international level. No wonder, players like Ganguly are being ill-treated."

Ugra fears it may not be long before the restriction on four foreign players per match is removed. "There was already an attempt to amend the rules and have six foreigners in a playing eleven before the auction this year, but luckily it was shot down," she said.

Nokia renews reward the players. Bangladesh are currently number 174 in the FIFA rankings and we want to bring it in the top 150 as one of our short-term goals," explained Prem.

At the press conference Nokia's Prem Chand also stated that an association of this kind will only compliment both parties and be mutually beneficial.

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'London on right track'

AFP, London

The International Olympic Committee's chief inspector said Thursday preparations for the 2012 London Olympics were "on the right track" and seemed unaffected by the global economic downturn.

"We can confirm that London 2012 is on the right track," Denis Oswald, the chair of the IOC's coordination commission, told journalists after his team spent three days visiting the construction sites.

"We had an opportunity to see the (Olympic) Park and for many of us it was the first time since May last year and we were deeply impressed by the progress made."

"The stadium is impressive, also the Olympic Village and the swimming pool," he added.

"The different venues are coming out of the ground and we know everything is on time and even ahead of schedule in some cases and this gives a very good feeling three years ahead of the Games."

The IOC delegation inspected the state of building work at the "big five" venues, including the main stadium, Aquatics Centre and velodrome.

Oswald said the progress of the work to transform a site in a deprived area of east London into the Olympic Park complete with venues and accommodation for thousands of athletes was continuing at full pace despite the credit crunch.

Naved given deadline

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan fast bowler Navedul Hasan has been given until 5pm on May 1 to rejoin the Yorkshire squad otherwise his contract will be terminated.

Naved has been making every effort to resolve ongoing issues in obtaining a work permit which the county admitted was "outside the control of both club and player".

However, the uncertainty as to when, and even if, he will be able to join Yorkshire led to them advising him of the deadline.

A county spokesman said that "he does appreciate the club's desire to move into the season with a full squad, which is obviously not possible in his absence".

Outsiders

FROM PAGE 17

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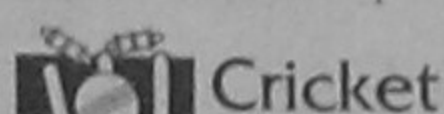
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A welcome win



CRICINFO, undated

It really didn't matter that Pakistan chased down their target tonight with all the assurance of a one-legged man roller-skating in quicksand with his hands tied behind his back. It only mattered that they chased them down at all, even if at one stage it seemed Misbah-ul-Haq was bent upon wrestling his countryman's hold on the longest international innings of all time.

Pakistan are not used to playing against Australia and they are certainly not used to winning against them; this was only a second win in their last 12 ODIs (over nearly seven years) against them. Though not many in this team are scarred by that kind of record, they batted as if that history was firmly on their mind. If this was a weakened, transitional Australia, it was Australia nonetheless and Pakistan can happily point to an absent middle-order bearded wonder and an equally absent lanky fast bowling genius.

But with the added layers of what has happened to Pakistan cricket over the last two months, the broader fate that has befallen them over the last two years, and to a nation seeking cheer as desperately as Susan, it is as welcome as might be a water cooler in the Thar desert. The details don't matter as much as the bigger picture but they are worth noting, if only to sketch an outline over the rest of the series.

Intikhab Alam, Pakistan's coach, had said before the series that spin would be key, but could he have imagined this? The modern Australia have often been limited against spin, struggling against it to score at pace. Johan Botha and several South African spinners played key roles in the two ODI series wins over them this year so Intikhab wasn't talking cheap. Indeed some might even smirk that if South African spinners are troubling you then you really have troubles.

But to crash so haplessly so as to lose eight for 27 at one stage and more significantly, look so utterly bewildered? Shahid Afridi has been one

Not in a spin: Clarke



CRICINFO, undated

Michael Clarke has defended Australia's reputation against spin after Shahid Afridi's career-best figures gave Pakistan a 1-0 lead in the five-game one-day series. Australia tumbled from 95 for 1 in the 19th over to 168 all out, a total Pakistan overhauled with four wickets in hand.

Afridi picked up 6 for 38 while the offspinner Saeed Ajmal captured 2 for 19 from his 10 overs. Clarke, who fell to Saeed for 4, called on his batsmen to be more disciplined in Friday's second game in Dubai.

"I certainly don't think we have a weakness against spin but we haven't been performing as well as we would have liked against them," Clarke told AAP. "Whether we like it or not we are going to be facing a lot of it so we have to practice hard against it and probably have to be a little more disciplined, especially on a wicket that is spinning."

Only four players reached double figures and Australia relied on an unbeaten 48 from James Hopes to extend the innings to 38.5 overs. "Again our middle order, four to six, didn't perform as well as we would have liked,"

'ICC's ruling hasty'



CRICINFO, undated

Javed Miandad, the former Pakistan captain and PCB's director general, has said he was 'shocked' by the ICC's 'hasty' decision to move the World Cup out of Pakistan.

"If safety was their concern then the 2011 World Cup should have been given to Australia and New Zealand and the Asian countries could have hosted the 2015 World Cup," he told AFP.

The ICC executive board took the decision following a meeting on Friday, citing the "uncertain security situation" in Pakistan in the aftermath of the Lahore terror attacks on March 3, when six policemen and two civilians were killed as gunmen fired at the Sri Lankan team bus.

Miandad also said the decision reeked of 'double standards'. "We did a wonderful job by staging a safe Test in Karachi but unfortunately things went wrong in Lahore," he said. "The same thing happened in Mumbai, India, but England did not have problems in touring."

The Pakistan board said it has lodged a

of Pakistan's better ODI bowlers in a unit that has struggled to show bite, conceding 300-plus five times since last June. He forms Pakistan's holding pattern generally: bring down the run-rate during the middle overs, maybe pick up one or two momentum-stifling wickets. He is rarely expected to wreck an entire line-up.

It's difficult to see what he did so differently today to what he has been doing. He did get marked drift and appreciable turn, as he does. He was accurate, as he is. He was generous mixing in his wrong 'uns and the other tidbits, as he always is. The only surprise was that Australia were so poor at playing fare that, among others, Sri Lanka and India have handled with relative comfort.

His collaborator Saeed Ajmal, meanwhile, has quietly gone about doing what is expected of many modern offies. He doesn't give runs up cheaply and it compensates for a lack of guile. His doosra has always spun and he doesn't mind using it, but Australia read him as well as you might expect them to read an Urdu newspaper. If you didn't know about their previous with spin, this could be put down as a freakish glitch. It may yet prove as much, at least in this series.

For now, though, the need isn't for such analysis. For tonight and tomorrow, Pakistan can bank a little in the glow of this win. How significant it might prove cannot yet be told, but much caution must be advised for days ahead. All Australian sides, even this one, have fight in their DNA - they will not let this series slip by just as they didn't this match.

And Pakistan are well-rehearsed in letting slip some good cheer from their grasp. The euphoric win against Sri Lanka in the 2006 Champions Trophy after Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif had been sent back, heralded only a shamolic exit soon after. More recently, they slipped against Sri Lanka at home, having trumped Murali and Mendis first up. Nobody will forget either that they were bowled out for 75 in the last game of that series; in fact their last ODI before this one.

Maybe the struggle to chase tonight is a good thing after all. It will - or it should - keep real the difficulty of the task ahead.

Not in a spin: Clarke

Clarke said. "Full credit has to go to the Pakistan bowlers, especially the spinners. I thought they did a fantastic job and put us under pressure, got wickets at vital times. So we've got some work to do in the nets in preparation for Friday's game."

Younis Khan, the Pakistan captain, expects Australia, the No. 2 team in the world, to hit back quickly, but also predicted his side would improve. "Sometimes you miss that experience, especially in batting, because we are not playing one-day international games in the last couple of months," he said. "So that's why we struggled a little in the batting, but I think we will get better."

Pakistan have also been hurt by Afridi's poor batting form - he has only one half-century in nearly two years. Afridi said he was focusing on a return to form with the bat. "My fans like me for my batting," he told AFP. "I would love to score more runs because this is my trademark and people want me to hit more fours and sixes."

That would also add to Australia's problems, which included an injured hamstring for the opener Shaun Marsh, who had returned from a long lay-off for a similar complaint. Marsh scored 16 before being run out and will be examined again on Thursday.

'ICC's ruling hasty'

formal protest with the ICC at the Dubai meeting over the shifting of World Cup matches from the country due to security reasons.

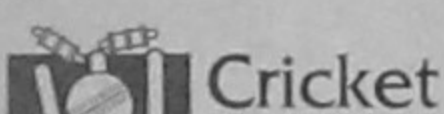
"We have registered our protest during the ICC meeting and our stance was that all four co-hosts of the World Cup were not treated equally by the ICC and they should have waited for six months before taking this decision," Saeed told AFP.

The ICC had also said that Pakistan was unlikely to resume hosting any international cricket at all until 2011. India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the other co-hosts for the World Cup, will now be hosting the 14 matches, including one semi-final, originally scheduled to be held in Pakistan.

Saeed questioned the ICC's rationale of hosting games in the other three Asian countries. "India shifted their cricket league [the IPL] to South Africa over security fears," he said. "We could not tour Bangladesh because there were security fears in March."

"The situation in Sri Lanka was not good either, so from the PCB chairman Ijaz Butt (to) our director general Javed Miandad, everyone has said that ICC must reconsider the decision."

You don't get the pitch Dyson!



CRICINFO, undated

John Dyson, the West Indies coach, won't be leaving Grace Road with many friends after his first-day remarks about the pitch didn't go down well with the Leicestershire. Just to make sure the club's feelings were clear they have denied the tourists the use of the pitch for extra practice on Thursday.

After 14 wickets fell on the opening day of the match Dyson hit out at the surface and said: "I don't think it's a good pitch." However, over the next two days those comments were made to look ill-advised as Lendl Simmons hit a century, then a young Leicestershire side batted out the final day to save the game. Following the draw Dyson made a request to use the pitch for a training session before the squad travels to Chelmsford for the next match.

"For me it's been an excellent game of cricket over three days and been an excellent cricket wicket and the very fact a young side were able to battle it out on the final day shows that it's been a good batting wicket throughout," David Smith, the Leicestershire chief executive, said. "I'm somewhat intrigued the West Indies coach has been critical of the wicket on day one and has now asked if they can

practice on it tomorrow and I don't think it's appropriate after his comments."

"They will be practising in the nets and they are very welcome, but I didn't take too kindly to the comments."

Dyson tried to prevent the incident escalating by saying he had no issue with not have the pitch available. "There's a nice big field out here so I'm sure we'll find something to do - there's no problem," he said.

West Indies now have two more warm-up games, against Essex and the England Lions, before the first Test at Lord's starts on May 6. They will be strengthened by the arrival of Shivnarine Chanderpaul while Jerome Taylor is expected to be available for next week's match against the Lions at Derby. The pair had been given extra time at home to recover from injuries they picked at the end of the home series.

Taylor and Fidel Edwards, who is still playing in the IPL along with captain Chris Gayle, are set to take the new ball in the two-match Test series which leaves West Indies looking for a third seamer from among Lionel Baker, Andrew Richardson and Darren Sammy.

"We've got a number of options for our pace attack," Dyson. "I've said to the guys on several occasions that all spots are up for grabs. We've got three games and those that perform in those three games can look with confidence at selection for the Test side."

'Runs over wickets'

FROM PAGE 17

India in the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup, held in South Africa two years ago.

"It is always a wish, a dream to be part of a World Cup winning team. We had bitter memories of the World Cup in the West Indies, so we want to win for our people who are deprived of cricket," said Afridi.

Pakistan were ousted in the first round of the 2007 World Cup, held in the West Indies, after they were shocked by outsiders Ireland.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first day-night one-day international match between Pakistan and Australia at the Dubai Stadium on Wednesday:

AUSTRALIA
Marsh run out 16
Haddin c Younis b Afridi 40

Watson b Afridi 40	Malik c Haddin b Hopes 24
Clarke c Akmal b Ajmal 4	Haq not out 30
Symonds c Akmal b Afridi 2	Afridi c Bracken b Hilfenhaus 24
Ferguson c Haq b Afridi 2	Jamshed b Symonds 9
Hopes not out 48	Gul not out 12
Hauritz b Ajmal 1	Extras: (lb-5, nb-6, w-1) 8
Bracken b Afridi 1	Total: (For 6 wts in 44.1 overs) 171
Clark b Afridi 2	Did not bat: Akhtar, Iftikhar, Hilfenhaus b Gul 4
Hilfenhaus b Gul 4	Ajmal 8
Extras: (lb-1, w-7) 8	Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-33, 3-81, 4-99, 5-138, 6-152
Total: (All out in 38.5 overs) 168	
Fall of wickets: 1-41, 2-95, 3-100, 4-107, 5-108, 6-109, 7-110, 8-118, 9-122	
Bowler O M R W	Bowler O M R W
Gul 9.5 0 48 1	Clark 8 1 32 1
Akhtar 6 0 35 0	Hauritz 6 0 27 0
Iftikhar 2 0 18 0	Symonds 3 0 18 1
Afridi 10 0 38 6	Result: Pakistan won by four wickets.
Ajmal 10 1 19 2	Man-of-the-match: Shahid Afridi.
Malik 1 0 9 0	Toss: Australia.
PAKISTAN	Umpires: Billy Bowden and Nadeem Ghouri.
Butt lbw b Hilfenhaus 5	
Akmal c Haddin b Clark 48	
Younis c Bracken b Hopes 11	

CROSSWORD													By Eugene Sheffer												
ACROSS													DOWN												
1 Poker variety	39 Homer's interjection	2 Big brass instrument	17 Sellers co-star	19 Road	22 Omega's opposite	24 Biz deg	25 Flooring	26 The U in "IOU"	27 Looks at intently	29 Joan of—	30 Petrol	33 Dis-	34 La												