



Hammers capture Chilean 'Wizard'

AFP, London

Italian champions' Inter Milan's Chilean international striker Luis Jimenez was snapped up on loan by English Premier League side West Ham on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old - known as the Wizard and capped 20 times - is the first signing for the Hammers Italian manager Gianfranco Zola this summer.

Jimenez - who hasn't represented Chile for over a year - joins on a season-long loan with a view to a possible permanent move.

"I can't promise anything but I am going to do everything possible to do a good job for the club," Jimenez told West Ham's website.

Jimenez made his name in Italy at Serie B side Ternana, where he scored 25 goals in 88 league appearances between 2002 and 2007.

Short spells at Fiorentina and Lazio followed before Inter Milan opted to buy him on a permanent basis after a promising loan spell in 2008.

Jimenez will have a tough battle to gain a regular first team place with England international squad members Carlton Cole and Dean Ashton and Spanish veteran Diego Tristán vying for places up front.

Sharapova

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with Sharapova, but the Russian is nothing if not competitive and she was back in contention with a break to trail 2-3.

Two successive double faults from a suddenly frail-looking Dulko then allowed Sharapova to lead 4-3 which became 5-3 on a service hold.

The former champion then unleashed a succession of thunderous service returns to further dismantle the Argentine's crumbling confidence and she broke again to level the tie in the ninth game.

Sharapova, now with renewed potency, was ahead to lead 1-0 in the decider before Dulko ended the Russian's seven-game streak to level at 1-1.

Breaks were exchanged in the next two games with Sharapova fighting off two breaks points, as well as picking up a time violation, in the fifth game.

Dulko, who has reached the third round here on three occasions, refused to be overpowered and she broke to love to lead 4-3 as the Centre Court crowd warmed further to the underdog.

Sharapova saved four match points in a tense 10th game, but Dulko claimed an emotional victory when the Russian unleashed a wild forehand.

Siddeshwari

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Football Championship as well as being over-aged.

The committee has also decided to ban Siddeshwari Girls High School for three years from the women's school championship.

Today, Sir John Wilson School will take on Viharunisa in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Boateng chooses Ghana

Football

AFP, Berlin

Midfielder Kevin Prince Boateng has joined Jermaine Jones in turning his back on a possible future with the German national team, plumping instead for Ghana, Sport Bild magazine reported on Wednesday.

"I would like to play for Ghana - I have made contact with officials ... It's Ghana I would like to progress with," the magazine quoted Boateng, 22, as saying.

Berlin-born Boateng spent the second half of last season on loan with Borussia Dortmund from Tottenham, where he had struggled to hold down a starting place.

He is now set to return to London as his Spurs contract runs to 2012.

He began his career with Hertha Berlin.

Jones, a 27-year-old midfielder with Schalke 04, decided earlier this month to play for the United States having only made it as far as the

German youth side whereas Boateng has made three appearances for the "A" team.

Boateng insisted he had nothing against the German Federation (DFB) for his lack of success in making it to the full side.

"There are no negatives behind my decision. I just don't see I have a chance when it comes to the DFB, that's all."

Jones had in contrast intimated that he did not find favour with Germany coach Joachim Loew, suggesting in the media that he did not make the Euro 2008 squad for reasons including having tattoos and also that the colour of his skin might not have helped him.

Jones has helped US and German nationality - his father is stationed with US forces in Germany.

He is to benefit from a FIFA decision made earlier this month to abolish age limits for a player to switch national side having set a previous limit of 21.

However, a player may not switch if he has played in qualifiers for a major tournament or in a tournament itself.

Bravo signs for Victoria T20 team

AFP, Melbourne

West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo has signed for the Victorian Bushrangers Twenty20 team, boosting their chances of securing a fourth national title, cricket officials said on Wednesday.

Cricket Victoria chief executive Tony Dodemaide said the 25-year-old would prove a big attraction for fans of Australia's 'Big Bash' competition.

"Dwayne is a proven performer in all forms of the game, particularly in Twenty20 cricket, and in addition to strengthening the team, we're confident he'll prove a big drawcard," he said.

Bravo, who has played 31 Tests, 95 one-day and 15 Twenty20 internationals, will break off for the tournament between the West Indies' Test and one-day series against Australia from November.

SA fans love Booth

AFP, Johannesburg



One player more than any other will stand out when South Africa take to the Ellis Park pitch to face Brazil in Thursday's Confederations Cup semi-final, namely Matthew Booth.

Shaven-headed Booth cuts a distinctive figure as he is the only white member on Joel Santana's team, he is also at 1.98m the tallest player in the entire competition.

The skyscraperesque 32-year-old is adored by the home fans.

Every time this towering defender goes in for a tackle supporters stop blowing their vuvuzelas and shout 'Booooooooth, Booooooooth'.

This can take the uninitiated unawares for on first hearing it sounds like the crowd are literally booing one of their own.

A Spanish newspaper actually wrote a story on what a curious phenomenon this was and Santana too was caught out when he succeeded Carlos Alberto Parreira.

"The first time I heard the shouts in the stadium I just couldn't understand what was going on. I was under the impression that the fans loved Matthew but there they were seemingly booing him for no apparent reason," said the Bafana Bafana coach.

The man himself told fifa.com: "I've lost count of the number of times I've had to explain to foreigners that there's nothing wrong, that people love me really."

"When Mark Fish played for Bafana Bafana it was the same. The fans shouted 'Fiiish, Fiiish' at

him and it sounded like they were having a go.

"I think it's got something to do with my commitment."

"The fans can see that I take games seriously. Or maybe it's just because I look like a nice guy to them."

After a spell in the international wilderness Booth, who is married to what one local journalist described as a "drop dead gorgeous" South African model, has muscled his way into the national reckoning at a crucial time.

He may not be the quickest thing on two feet but Booth's height and strength and defensive nous have played their part in South Africa's advance to the last four and against set-piece specialists Brazil he is going to be one of the host's key players.

Booth has just returned from seven seasons on Russian soil first with FK Rostov and then Krylya Sovetov Samara, but is now back home playing for Mamelodi Sundowns.

And he's relishing his time in the international spotlight.

Booth has his heart set on making it into Santana's squad for the 2010 World Cup, all the more so as he was robbed of a chance to compete at the 2002 edition in Japan and South Korea when he suffered a knee injury in the run up to the first game.

"It came at the worst possible time," he recalled.

"That's why I want to try and convince Joel Santana with my performances at the Confederations Cup and make sure of a place for 2010. It would mean so much to me."

He has his opportunity at Ellis Park to enhance his prospects of putting on the national colours again in 12 months time when the big one comes to town.

Murray slams

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defeat Ukraine's Alona Bondarenko, the world number 33.

She next plays experienced Belgian Kirsken Flipkens with a potential third round clash with world number one Dinara Safina the potential reward for victory.

"It was a shame that all of them were going out in three sets pretty much," said the world 106.

Britain's feeble efforts were summed up by the performance of 25-year-old Alex Bogdanovic who has lost all eight matches he has played at Wimbledon.

His latest attempt to get beyond the opening Tuesday ended in familiar fashion, a

6-3, 6-4, 6-3 defeat at the hands of Czech 20th seed Tomas Berdych.

But with true British pluck, the world 191 is not giving up even though his dismal record makes him one of the worst performers at the All England Club.

"I'm not really concerned about that. I go out there every year, trying to win my match, to do my best. It doesn't matter if I lose eight times, ten times," he said.

"Definitely every year I'm getting better and stronger. This is giving me confidence just to keep working hard and keep believing that I can get myself back in the top hundred, where I believe I deserve."

Sania sent packing

AFP, London

Indian number one Sania Mirza tumbled out of Wimbledon in the second round, losing 6-4, 6-4 to Romanian number 28 seed Sorana Cirstea on Wednesday.

Mirza was able to break her friend's serve but hit far more unforced errors than the French Open quarterfinalist.

Cirstea faces either Belarusian number eight seed Victoria Azarenka or Romanian Ioana Raluca Olaru in the third round.

Ouma named new Kenyan captain

AFP, Nairobi

Wicketkeeper-batsman Morris Ouma was on Wednesday named new Kenyan cricket captain to lead the team in the opening match of the ICC Intercontinental Cup against holders Ireland next month.

The Cricket Kenya (CK) selectors have overlooked all-rounder Thomas Oduyo, who was expected to step-up from the vice-captaincy to replace the retiring former skipper Steve Tikolo.

The 26-year-old Ouma has played 43 ODIs with three half centuries. He scored 114 runs in the ICC Intercontinental Cup tie against the Netherlands to help Kenya win by an innings and six runs in August 2008.

Off-spinner Jimmy Kamande becomes the new vice captain.

SQUAD
Morris Ouma (captain), Jimmy Kamande (vice-captain), Kennedy Obuya, Alex Obanda, Steve Tikolo, Collins Obuya, Thomas Oduyo, Nehemiah Odhiambo, Lameck Onyango, Peter Ongondo, Hiren Varaiya, Rakep Patel, Elijah Otieno, Seren Waters, David Obuya.

Safin hates grass

AFP, London



Marat Safin admits he is glad to see the back of Wimbledon after the former world number one suffered a surprise first round exit in his final appearance on the grass courts he has grown to loathe.

Safin was making his farewell to the All England Club before he retires later this year, but perhaps fittingly, the Russian's valedictory tour was brief and typically bizarre as he was defeated 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 by American qualifier Jesse Levine.

The former Australian and US Open champion has never hidden his dislike of a surface that has left him red-faced on many of his visits to south west London.

Even last year's run to the semi-finals, where he was beaten by Roger Federer, won't make Wimbledon a more pleasant memory for Safin when he gets around to reflecting on the highs and lows of his career.

So, when asked how he felt about playing at Wimbledon for the last time, perhaps it was no

surprise Safin said: "Relieved. Pretty much relieved. It's not the perfect way to finish the Wimbledon story but that's life."

"It was tough for me to move on court here, especially when I'm a tall guy, who has been struggling for a couple of years with injuries."

"There haven't been many matches here that I played well. So I think against (Goran) Ivanisevic in 2001 when I had a chance to win it, the year he won. And last year against (Novak) Djokovic. That's it."

Safin only made it past the third round here twice, in 2001 and 2008, but even on his favourite hard courts the suspicion remains that, for a player blessed with the talent to beat Pete Sampras in a US Open final, he will finish his career as an under-achiever.

Yet Safin, whose sister Dinara Safina is the women's world number one, is adamant he has no complaints about his achievements. His only regret was the knee injuries that affected his game in the final years of his career.

"You know what, in the history of tennis, every single player is an under-achiever. (Andre) Agassi should have

been winning 15 Grand Slams. Sampras should have been winning 20 Grand Slams. Federer should be winning 25 already," he said.

"Everybody could do better. I should probably have won a couple of more, but I'm pretty satisfied with what I did."

"Many things happened in my career. The life was pretty intense, so I can't complain. There were a lot of changes, a lot of difficult situations, a lot of fun situations."

"But I think I've managed to do pretty well in my career. Unfortunately, I was a little bit unlucky with my injuries. That's the only thing that I regret, but I cannot do anything about it."

"I made a couple of great comebacks. But eventually the knee injury was really tough to come back from. It took quite a long time to play tennis without any pain."

As the long, lonely hours of rehabilitation and endless time spent in hotels and locker rooms away from home start to become a distant memory, Safin - who claims to have broken 700 racquets in his career - may realise that he could have achieved more.

Watson fear allayed

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Concerns surrounding Shane Watson's Ashes availability have been partially allayed, with scans clearing him of a serious knee injury. Watson, who was ruled out of Australia's tour-opening practice match against Sussex with knee soreness, was diagnosed with a low-grade quadriceps strain and is now in line to play against England Lions at Worcester, beginning July 1.

"We expect this injury should resolve quickly," said Australian team physiotherapist Alex Kountouris. "His return to play will be guided by progress in the next few days."

Despite the positive prognosis, Watson will be acutely aware he has missed a prime opportunity to impress the selectors in his bid to dislodge Marcus North from the No. 6 Test position. The all-rounder was desperate to begin the Ashes tour on a positive note - not least because a hamstring injury ended his 2006-07 campaign before the first Test - and his absence from the Sussex match will do little for his confidence, or that of the team.

Watson was struck down with back stress fractures during the most recent Australian summer, and only made his return to competitive bowling during Australia's truncated World Twenty20 campaign. Speaking on the eve of the tour-opening match at Hove, Australian captain Ricky Ponting hinted at the nervousness within the team over Watson's fitness by discussing the possibility of bringing in a shadow player as cover.

"We might have to do that," Ponting said. "That has been

some of the discussion this afternoon, particularly if we happen to have a batter hurt themselves in this game, we could be a little bit short. We certainly have to consider that. Shane was probably picked as the spare batter on the tour anyway, and someone who could give us some valuable overs if required, so it could get to the stage if someone happened to get hurt in this game that Shane could probably come in and play as a batsman if required anyway."

"Hopefully within a couple of days he's right to start working back up on his bowling and hopefully he plays the Worcester game at 100% fitness. For him it's obviously a setback. He's disappointed he wasn't available for selection in this game. I don't know if it harms his chances any more for the first Test match, but it's an opportunity that has slipped out of his grasp I guess."

The Australians have thus far refrained from calling in injury cover for Watson, although Victorian coach Greg Shipperd has already commenced the campaign for

Brad Hodge to be next in line. "If they choose to replace a batsman for a batsman ... Hodge would be an ideal replacement for him and the right one," Shipperd said.

Watson was joined by Graham Manou, Andrew McDonald and Mitchell Johnson on the sidelines for the 12-a-side tour match against Sussex, although none of the latter three are understood to be burdened with injury. Johnson's omission is a clear indication that selectors now view him as Australia's premier paceman, leaving Brett Lee, Peter Siddle, Stuart Clark and Ben Hilfenhaus to fight for the remaining fast-bowling slots for the Ashes series.

"We have got the right to play twelve players in this game, but that does not mean we will be using it as practice," Ponting said. "We will be using this game to get used to the conditions. We believe this wicket will be the most like Cardiff anywhere in the country, so it will be a good opportunity for us as batsmen to get used to the pace and bounce, maybe a bit of spin."

Watson was in buoyant mood at Australia's open media day in Hove on Monday, despite missing the day's training session. Though admitting he had pulled up "a little stuff" the previous day, he gave a strong indication that he expected to be back bowling shortly.

"I'm not exactly sure what the selectors are thinking," Watson said. "But my bowling has been progressing really well. The Twenty20 was the first time I had bowled in a game competitively since Christmas time. The things I've done technically are definitely going to help me improve a lot."



SHANE WATSON

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I IMAGINE A KITCHEN TOOL THAT TAKES THE SKINS OFF OF SOUR FRUITS MIGHT GET CALLED A LEMON AID.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals E