

Eng to host Aus-Pak matches

AFP, London

England will host two Test matches and two T20 internationals between Pakistan and Australia in 2010, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Friday.

Pakistan is currently unable to host international cricket because of security concerns, which were heightened following a terrorist attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in March in Lahore.

The ECB also announced that England will take on Pakistan in four Tests, five one-day internationals and two T20 Internationals in England in August and September of next year.

National chess

SPORTS REPORTER

The 35th Mercantile Bank National Chess Championship will start on Monday at the National Sports Council (NSC) conference room.

A total of fourteen players will take part in the final phase. The players are GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Enamul Hossain, GM Reefat Bin Sattar, GM Niaz Murshed, FM Taibur Rahman, Jamal Uddin, Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan, FM Abu Sufian Shakil, Debaraj Chatterjee, Aminul Islam Polash, Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin, Mohammad Hasan Emam and Mohammad Ali.

The number draw will be held tomorrow.

Federer reaches

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The 26-year-old responded tartly: "I'm happy to have got my match over and done with," before comparing her treatment to that afforded to Roger Federer, who was playing his third successive match on centre court.

"Number two is not a court for Roger but it is definitely one for me," she said. "I have not won it five times (like Federer), I've won it twice and I guess it is not enough."

Hantuchova, who lost to Serena Williams in the quarter-finals here in 2002, advanced at the expense of her doubles partner, Ai Sugiyama, with a 6-4, 6-3 victory.

Elena Dementieva, the Russian who is scheduled to face Williams at the semi-final stage, made light work of qualifier and compatriot Regina Kulikova, cruising to a 6-1, 6-2 win.

Under

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primarily to curb the phenomenal run-scoring of Australia great Donald Bradman.

Philip Eden, vice-president of the Royal Meteorological Society, said: "It is rare to find a piece of meteorological research directly related to professional sport... there should be more work like this."

"As a long-standing cricket supporter and England fan I believe that the England management should read this paper carefully and inwardly digest."

"It could help us win in Australia next time."

No WC in UAE

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of reaching a settlement but I couldn't go into any more detail than that. The legal action doesn't help but I don't think it make it any more difficult."

Following last year's Mumbai terror attacks, security concerns have also been expressed regarding the safety of India as a venue for international cricket while a long-running civil war in Sri Lanka has only recently ended.

But Morgan said Pakistan's case was not comparable to that of its Asian neighbours.

"The situation in Pakistan is different. The tragic happenings in Lahore when a cricket team was targeted and the player control team was targeted, that changed the landscape of safety and security in cricket, in sport generally and in terms of sporting events of an international nature in Pakistan."



Did U Know?

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, was a rower.



KEVIN PIETERSEN

KP nearly 100 per cent

Cricket

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen did his best to allay concerns over his troublesome Achilles injury ahead of the Ashes by declaring himself "practically 100 percent fit".

The former England captain is widely regarded as crucial to the home side's hopes of regaining the Ashes from Australia.

Former Australia leg-spinner Shane Warne, who was Pietersen's county captain at Hampshire, went even further by saying on Wednesday that England had no chance without the South Africa born star batsman.

"The one person England have to have is Kevin Pietersen," said Warne, who retired from Test cricket after Australia's thumping 5-0 Ashes series win on home soil in 2006-07.

"If England haven't got Pietersen I don't believe they can win. He's just a wonderful player."

Pietersen warned recently that if his injury, which was originally sustained during England's tour of the Caribbean earlier this year, flared up on the morning of a Test he would be ruled out.

But, speaking to Sky Sports on Thursday, he said: "I am nursing my injury at the moment, getting myself right. I'm practically 100 percent fit so I don't want any setbacks."

"It's real good news, I've been rehabbing every single day since the injury. The last couple

of weeks I've done quite a lot of work so, fingers crossed, I am going to be pretty good for the whole summer."

Looking ahead to the current Ashes series, Pietersen added: "I don't think it's a case of revenge, I think it's a case of going out there and playing positive cricket and backing the lads that we've got in the dressing room."

England's most recent Test series saw them overwhelm a lacklustre and demotivated West Indies 2-0 in early season English conditions.

Otherwise, England's Test form of late has been nothing to write home about.

Nevertheless, the ever-confident Pietersen said: "The vibe in the dressing room is fantastic, the guys have played some awesome, awesome cricket; all the batters are getting hundreds, all the bowlers are getting wickets and we're holding our catches."

"All being well it's going to be a fantastic series and I'm not going to get into any talk about who's going to win, who's going to lose, I just think that the team that plays the best cricket over 25 days is going to win the series and that's it."

Pietersen's 158 at the Oval four years ago in his debut Test campaign helped England secure the draw in the Ashes finale which left them as 2-1 series winners.

He also made 158 in the Adelaide Test of 2006. In all his 52 Tests Pietersen averages 50.49 but in his 10 matches against Australia his average stands at 53.50.

The first Test of the current Ashes series is due to start in Cardiff on July 8.

ICC stand by Pak

Cricket

AFP, London

International cricket's leading administrator insisted Thursday he was doing all he could to support Pakistan after confirming the troubled country would not host matches at the 2011 World Cup.

However, International Cricket Council president David Morgan, speaking to reporters on Thursday after the second day of the global governing body's meeting here at Lord's, also said the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had accepted the help of a "task team" in retaining its position in international cricket.

The offer was first made at the ICC's meeting in January/February in Perth, Western Australia. Morgan said the task team would be led by ICC director Giles Clarke, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and one of the prime movers behind a plan to stage a Test series between Pakistan and Australia in England next year.

The team would also include David Richardson, the ICC's general manager for cricket and a former South Africa wicket-keeper although its terms of reference, including additional membership, had still to be decided.

"We are delighted the PCB has accepted the ICC's offer of assistance as we seek to ensure Pakistan is not isolated as a result of circumstances beyond the control of its cricket administrators," former ECB chairman Morgan said.

Pakistan was one of four original World Cup co-hosts along with fellow Indian sub-continent Test nations India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

But the ICC ruled out matches in violence-hit Pakistan following the militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore on March 3 while it was on its way to the Gaddafi stadium to resume a Test match.

Morgan confirmed that the 14 World Cup matches originally allocated to Pakistan would be re-distributed within India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

He also added that the decision taken at a previous ICC meeting at its Dubai headquarters in April 17 and 18 that Lahore would no longer be the World Cup's administrative headquarters

stood as well.

But Morgan, flanked by ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat, stressed the PCB remained a World Cup co-host and would still receive a hosting fee of 750,000 dollars per match - 10.5 million dollars in total.

Following last year's Mumbai terror attacks, security concerns have also been expressed regarding the safety of India as a venue for international cricket while a long-running civil war in Sri Lanka has only recently ended.

But Morgan said: "The situation in Pakistan is different."

"The tragic happenings in Lahore when a cricket team was targeted and the player control team was targeted, that changed the landscape of safety and security in cricket, in sport generally and in terms of sporting events of an international nature in Pakistan."

"That is very sad for Pakistan, very sad indeed. But Mr Lorgat and I have done our utmost to try to ensure that Pakistan as a cricketing nation is not isolated despite the fact that we cannot, in the foreseeable future, see other cricketing teams at national level visiting Pakistan."

Morgan said the ICC had looked at staging matches in a "fifth country", amidst speculation that matches could be shifted to the United Arab Emirates.

But he added: "The (ICC) board has considered that but it has decided the 14 matches originally allocated to Pakistan should take place in the three other Indian sub-continent countries of the Full Members, that is India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh."

His comments appeared to end any hopes the PCB, which is taking legal action against the ICC, had of staging its tournament matches in a 'neutral' venue.

How many of Pakistan's World Cup games will be played in each of the three other co-host countries has yet to be decided.

The ICC has referred the matter back to the tournament's central organising committee and Morgan said he expected a decision within a fortnight.

Pakistan, who beat Sri Lanka in Sunday's World Twenty20 final at Lord's, are about to embark on a tour of the island nation, starting next week, featuring three Tests, five one-day internationals and one Twenty20 international.

Pressure is on Ponting

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18 overs against a Sussex side with no star batsmen in the tour opener at Hove on Thursday.

England, by contrast, have three spinners in their squad in off-break bowler Graeme Swann, leg-spinner Adil Rashid (uncapped at Test level) and left-arm Panesar and could well field two in Cardiff.

"Whether we play two spinners or not, we are going to have to see what the wicket is like in Cardiff. But I think we've got all bases covered at the moment," said Strauss.

And in the likes of pace bowling all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, swing specialist James Anderson and left-arm Ryan Sidebottom, as

well as out of favour fast bowler Stephen Harmison, England also have seam bowling options.

"I like the variety in our seam bowling attack," said Strauss, "with some hit the deck bowlers, some swing bowlers and Ryan Sidebottom as the left-armer."

Panesar has seen his place as England's number one spinner usurped by Swann in recent months.

But for all the flak that has come his way from Warne for his failure to develop as a bowler, the 27-year-old Panesar has still taken 125 Test wickets in 38 matches at an average of just over 33 apiece.

Panesar has been working on adding deliveries to his

armoury with England's spin bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed, the former Pakistan leg-break bowler.

But Strauss said Panesar needed to remember why he had done well in Tests.

"Monty has been working on variations but the reality is that he has taken 99 percent of his wickets bowling a very good left-arm spinner that turns and has decent pace on it," Strauss said.

"That's his default and he shouldn't stray too far from it. It's like me trying to bat like Brian Lara - it won't work."

"It's important that he just does what he does well and if he does that he's going to be a handful."

Serena pays tribute to pop king Jackson

AFP, London

Former Wimbledon champion Serena Williams has paid tribute to pop legend Michael Jackson, who died from a heart attack on Thursday.

Williams had already posted her condolences to the Jackson family on the Twitter website hours after the 50-year-old's death in Los Angeles.

The American, who won Wimbledon in 2002 and 2003, offered an even more fulsome tribute after defeating Roberta Vinci in the third round at the All-England Club on Friday.

"He was a great guy, a complete icon. Words can't express my shock and horror," Serena said. "My thoughts and prayers go out to him and his family. It was a terrible thing."

"Everyone listens to his music. You think of the Beatles, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson. They are lifetime icons that are never forgotten. Everyone of every colour and race is a huge Michael Jackson fan."

"He's not been really well from what I read and he's been in and out of the hospital so I wasn't super-shocked, but he's the greatest entertainer of all time."

Serena spent time with Jackson on several occasions and admitted she was in awe of the singer.

"I met him a few times. I was honoured to meet him. He had such a great heart," she said.

"He was the ultimate celebrity. Any celebrity that met him was in complete awe. I know I was. When I met him I was like 'it's him, it's him'."

"He did things that no-one else did. Thriller is still the best video made to this day. He started a whole new trend with that."

WOMEN'S CRICKET England beat Australia

AFP, London

England, just days after winning the women's World Twenty20 title, went down to a 34-run Twenty20 loss to Australia in Derby on Thursday.

England had defeated their archrivals in a dramatic World Twenty20 semi-final run chase at the Oval last week, with Claire Taylor and Beth Morgan scoring 122 off 78 balls, before going on to beat New Zealand comprehensively in the final.

But it was a different story on Thursday with Taylor's 31 the top score in a total of 117 for six made in reply to Australia's 151 for three.

Former Australia captain Karen Rolton made 43 not out while Shelley Nitschke was named player of the match for her 32 and one wicket for 21 runs.

Gilly's no to D/N Tests

AFP, London

Australia great Adam Gilchrist has spoken out against the advent of day/night Test cricket.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said Thursday it was looking into day/night Tests which, if a suitable ball could be developed along with several other conditions, could lead to a Test under floodlights in 2010.

It also said the controversial umpire referral system would be rolled out in Test matches from October.

But former wicket-keeper/batsman Gilchrist, giving the Cowdrey Lecture at Lord's on Wednesday, said: "Many of cricket's innovations should be applied only in the shorter forms of the game."

"This not only includes the expanded umpire referral system, but especially the mooted introduction of night Test cricket and a different coloured ball needed to accommodate this."

"My personal experience nearly 15 years ago with night Sheffield Shield cricket was that it struggled because of the very different playing conditions between day and night."

"Often it made for an unfair contest, especially when batting, which always seemed much more difficult late in the evening than earlier in the afternoon."

"But all of this begs the bigger question - why play around with Test cricket at all?"

"Fine tune maybe, but not fundamental changes. As someone recently said - you don't see the London Philharmonic doing a rapers' remix of Beethoven's Fifth - so why should cricket do the same with its masterpiece?"

Nielsen backs bowlers

Cricket

AFP, Hove

Australia coach Tim Nielsen came to the defence of his bowlers after they needed more than 80 overs to dismiss Sussex in their Ashes tour opener at Hove here on Thursday.

At stumps on the second day of four, Australia were 18 without loss in their second innings - an overall lead of 56 - after the hosts had made 311 in reply to the tourists' first innings 347.

Pacemen Stuart Clark, Brett Lee, Peter Siddle and Ben Hilfenhaus are all battling to join Mitchell Johnson, rested from this match, in Australia's attack for the first Test against England at Cardiff on July 8.

Clark took three wickets for 46 runs, with the faster Lee claiming three for 53 although his return included eight no-balls. Siddle had figures of two for 33 and Hilfenhaus one for 31.

Encouragingly for England, off-spinner Nathan Hauritz, the lone specialist slow bowler in Australia's squad and often portrayed as the weakest link in their attack, went wicketless in an 18-over spell that yielded 98 runs on a pitch taking turn.

"Some days if you're not quite on your game and the opposition are playing well then you're certainly going to get hurt, our challenge is to work out why it didn't go quite so well for us today," said Nielsen.

"It was good for us to have to work hard through their lower order and they played pretty well."

"As for the no balls, shocking weren't they! We're pulling our hair out about them and it's the only thing I am a bit grumpy about tonight."

"We don't bowl them in Twenty20, maybe because it's a free hit after, but we didn't have a

bowler apart from (Simon) Katich who didn't concede a no ball today."

"It's certainly something we've got to fix up and work at. Look, we've had our first roll since March 15 in a four-day game but we're certainly not going to panic because guys have not had the best days."

"When we sat down and tried to organise our tour that was exactly the reasoning behind having two tour games against counties."

"We wanted to make sure we had plenty of time to give all the players good quality playing time before the first Test came around to get any kinks out of the system and we started that process here today."

Turning to Hauritz, the coach added: "I thought he was good in patches but didn't bowl as well as he would have liked in other patches, but that was generally the day of all our bowlers I think. He won't be sitting back tonight thinking it's all roses that's for certain."

"More than half the runs Sussex scored were in boundaries and that sums the day up for us, we probably bowled one loose ball an over, be it Nathan or the quicks, and the times we were able to bowl with some control and to our fields were the times we got lots of wickets."

Sussex were 138 for five but a 40 from wicket-keeper Andrew Hodd and all-rounder Robin Martin-Jenkins's 35 helped them close to within sight of Australia's first innings score.

Hodd, hit in the throat by a Clark bouncer, said: "It's not often you can say you have scrapped hard against a few of your boyhood heroes and enjoyed it."

"I got one right in the throat, I've got two Adam's apples at the moment. I played it like a hand grenade unfortunately and set myself up for quite a bit more short stuff."

Australia have one more match, against the England Lions next week, before the first Ashes Test.

Bond welcomed back

Cricket

CRICINFO STAFF

New Zealand have given Shane Bond a clear indication that he is in their plans for the next year after being handed a central contract for 2009-10. Bond, who gave up his national deal when he joined the ICL 18 months ago, is one of seven additions to the New Zealand squad following sweeping changes that have led to Scott Styris, Aaron Redmond and five others losing their spots.

Jamie How, Mark Gillespie, Peter Fulton, James Marshall and Michael Mason were also axed from the 20-man group after slipping out of the national side during the past year. Joining Bond in the squad are six men who have been offered contracts for the first time: Grant Elliott, Tim McIntosh, Martin Gupitll, Ian Butler, Neil Broom and Brent Arnel.

The inclusion of Bond, 34, is another step towards his international return after he severed ties with the ICL having not played for his country since November 2007. The head of the selection panel, Glenn Turner, said New Zealand were hopeful Bond could make valuable contributions to New Zealand over the next year.

"Shane Bond is confident he can continue to contribute to the Black Caps," Turner said. "He has performed well in the shorter form of the game at domestic level - while his international track record is outstanding."

Unlike Bond, there was no room in the top 20 for Daryl Tuffey, who is also hoping for a

return to international cricket following his time in the ICL. More of a surprise was the omission of Redmond, How, Styris and Fulton, all of whom have been regular or semi-regular members of the New Zealand side over the past year.

"Some experienced players have missed out as a result of new players forcing their way into the top twenty and that's a good sign for the game," Turner said. "Players who have missed out on contracts have the opportunity to play their way into the Black Caps in the domestic season, or through the A team and Emerging Players tours."

The past 12 months has been a period of change for New Zealand with the emergence of new players like McIntosh, Elliott and Gupitll. Turner said Gupitll in particular was one man who had thrilled the selectors with his early international outings.

"He has played his way into being considered a core squad member," Turner said. "His ODI average is already ahead of other leading players, and for his age shows the promise of more to come."

New Zealand's next commitment is a tour of Sri Lanka starting in August. They are scheduled to play two Tests, five one-day internationals and two Twenty20s.

New Zealand contracted players Brent Arnel, Shane Bond, Neil Broom, Ian Butler, Grant Elliott, James Franklin, Daniel Flynn, Martin Gupitll, Gareth Hopkins, Brendon McCullum, Tim McIntosh, Chris Martin, Kyle Mills, Iain O'Brien, Jacob Oram, Jeetan Patel, Jesse Ryder, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Daniel Vettori.

Younus ready for SL

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rivals will put up their best efforts.

"In Kumar Sangakkara, Sri Lanka have a wise captain and their team is balanced with quality players, so we will have to be at our best to get positive results," said Younus, who will be on his first Test tour as captain.

"It will be double pressure on us because our people want wins in every match and after the T20 success they want more success and that can put pressure on us, but we are ready for it."

Younus believes Test cricket is the purest form of the game and both teams are adept at changing their skills in the various forms of the game.

"Twenty20 cricket is different and now Test cricket is different, it seriously tests the abilities of a player

whereas I don't think the abilities of a player can be gauged in a T20 match," said Younus.

Pakistan will be boosted by the return of ace batsman Mohammad Yousuf and all-rounder Abdul Razzaq.

Both Yousuf and Razzaq were included in the 15-man squad after they broke ties with the unrecognised Indian Cricket League earlier this month.

They joined the rebel league in 2007 and as a result had been banned from all cricket in Pakistan.

"Yousuf is a quality player and gives strength to our middle-order batting," said Younus of the 34-year-old Yousuf who scored a world record of 1,788 runs in 2006 - the most in Test cricket in a calendar year.

Razzaq was part of the Pakistan team which won the

Twenty20 title, replacing an injured Yasir Arafat after the first round.

Leg-spinner Danish Kaneria also returns to the team after being left out of the T20 squad.

"Kaneria gives us variety and alongwith Saeed Ajmal supplements our spin bowling, so it will be a keen contest between two balanced teams and I hope it will be a great series," said Younus.

The remaining two Tests will be played in Colombo, followed by the one-day matches and the T20 game.

Flintoff back

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Nantie Haywood, pulling him for two sixes and three fours as 26 runs came off the 18th over.

What made life even worse for Derbyshire was that Flintoff combined with India batsman VVS Laxman (63) to share a stand of 99 in 10 overs.

In the end Flintoff was only denied a century by a brilliant one-handed catch on the boundary by Greg Smith.

Pace bowler Flintoff, only recently returned from a knee injury, then took two wickets for 32 runs from his four overs as Lancashire won by 56 runs in what was his last match before joining up with England.

Flintoff's Test team-mate Alastair Cook, left out of England's World Twenty20 squad, made 100 not out as Essex beat Surrey by 84 runs at the Oval.

Left-hander Cook, who has a reputation as a solid if unspectacular Test match opening batsman, faced 57 balls with two sixes and 11 fours.

Pak fights for games

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