

Boycott fears for Tests

AFP, London

England great Geoffrey Boycott warned on Tuesday Test cricket was "dying" around the world because of a lack of spectator interest and said radical action was needed to revitalise the five-day game.

The former opening batsman said crowds at Ashes matches masked the dwindling attendances for Tests elsewhere in the world, with even the recent series between South Africa and Australia, arguably the two strongest teams around, failing to sell-out.

Boycott, speaking to reporters at Lord's here on Tuesday, said: "If you're watching England against Australia this summer, we're all seduced into believing Test cricket is fine because you could sell Test match cricket twice over for huge amounts of money because it's the oldest form of Test match cricket and has history and tradition."

"But every other series around the world there are declining attendances and there have been declining attendances for many years," the Yorkshireman added.

"Everywhere crowds are down except in England and Australia...we have to tweak it a bit or do something to get bums on seats or their will be hardly anybody watching except television in 20 or 30 years' time."

The MCC cricket committee, which is made-up of former and current international players such as Australia's Steve Waugh and India's Rahul Dravid, called for a World Test Championship similar to the World Championships that exist in 50-over and Twenty20 cricket, to reignite interest.

Although there are world Test rankings, which do ultimately lead to a team being declared the best side in the world, they have yet to become part of the fabric of the game.

"Test cricketers want to be able to say they're the world champions of Test cricket," said Waugh.

"We can say it in the Twenty20 and 50-over game but Test cricket continues on and on. There's the ranking system but there's no actual trophy where you can hold it aloft."

"Something definitely needs to be done to lift the profile of Test cricket. Most players still believe it is the pinnacle of the game and why not reward that every couple of years with a Test cricket championship or a trophy you've won."

BNS ground

FROM PAGE 17

During the rainy season, the BNS ground goes under water for lack of proper drainage system and pot-holes create obstacles to smooth play.

BFF will start the football season with Federation Cup in mid-September, followed by Bangabandhu International Gold Cup in the third week of October and the 3rd Citycell B. League early December.

Windies retain

FROM PAGE 17

Withdrew from the team following a dispute with the WICB. West Indies lost to Bangladesh by 95 runs, giving the touring side their first Test victory away from home.

SQUAD

Floyd Reifer (captain), Darren Sammy (vice-captain), Ryan Austin, David Bernard Jr, Tino Best, Travis Dowlin, Ryan Hinds, Kevin McClean, Nikita Miller, Nelson Pascal, Omar Phillips, Dale Richards, Kemar Roach, Chadwick Walton.

Mash unlikely

FROM PAGE 17

spinner in the team to expose the Caribbean batsmen.

The team may not suffer for Mashrafe's captaincy but his presence is always inspirational for the team. The team definitely will not only miss Mashrafe's bowling but also his batting as he played a face-saving 39 in the otherwise dismal batting of his team in the first innings.

Daily Star bow

FROM PAGE 17

was IDFC who put nine past a hapless Securax.

Nokia continued their rise, scoring a 5-0 win over Grey while Olympic Industries also continued their ascent with a 4-2 win over Rahimafrooz.

HRC, Novartis and Ispahani all found the going much tougher but ended winners on the night in tight games.



The players of the Khabongpuriya Samobay Samiti, who lifted the Teletalk cricket tournament title, pose for photographs at the Khagrachari Government High school ground yesterday.

Pakistanis search reason

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former greats Wednesday blamed poor Pakistan team spirit for yet another sudden batting collapse that forced a seven-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka in the second Test in Colombo.

Pakistan, seemingly in command at 285-1, lost their last nine wickets for 35 runs to be bowled out for 320 in their second innings. Sri Lanka raced to the 171-run target to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-Test series.

The tourists suffered a similar collapse in the first Test, when requiring 97 to win with nine wickets intact at Galle, they lost by 50 runs. On the first day of the second Test, Pakistan also crumbled for a paltry 90 in 36 overs.

Pakistan's former chief selector Abdul Qadir said factionalism and poor team spirit had long been a problem.

"When I resigned as chief selector, I am on record as saying that Shoaib Malik should be punished for letting captain Younus Khan down and I maintain that there is factionalism in the team," the former leg-spinner told AFP.

Qadir resigned as selector last month, citing interference from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Younus, coach Intikhab Alam and manager Yawar Saad.

"What I said was on the basis of what I saw during the series against Australia in United Arab Emirates (UAE) two months ago and I said that seniors were not co-operating with Younus," said Qadir.

"I said this before and I reiterate that the

coach and manager's reports of this Sri Lanka tour should be made public. Had the UAE series report been made public, things would have been sorted out by now."

Former paceman Sarfraz Nawaz also pinned the blame on former captain Malik, who was sacked after defeats against Sri Lanka earlier this year.

"Malik, along with four senior players, is doing politics," said Nawaz. "Misbahul Haq should be excluded from the team as he has failed and should be replaced by new players."

Younus blamed Pakistan's Test series defeat on inexperience, saying his team just does not play enough matches.

But Nawaz said Younus had failed as captain. "Younus doesn't have leadership qualities," said Nawaz. "If a captain is not able to handle his players' batting failures and comes out with lame excuses of playing less Test cricket, he doesn't have the qualities of a good captain."

Former captain Inzamamul Haq said team spirit was poor.

"The situation in the team is not good," said Inzamam. "I can smell factionalism within the team and Younus is not doing his best to keep the team united, and that does not augur well for our cricket."

PCB chairman Ijaz Butt was quick to deny the charges of splits in the team camp.

"There can be no chance of factionalism in the team as I believe Younus has good relations with seniors like Misbah and others," Butt told media in Lahore, also ruling out the prospect of a major shake-up.

"It is not a joke to change captain again and again," said Butt, who sacked Malik earlier this year.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17

Murad and Mosharaf picked up three wickets for 29 and 34 runs respectively.

In reply, Victoria Club were bundled out for 162 runs with Tipu scoring 36 runs. Alkesh Chakma claimed three wickets for 29 runs.

Jibon Dewan was adjudged man-of-the-match and man-of-the-tournament for his outstanding performance.

Local lawmaker Zatintra Lal Tripura distributed the prizes as chief guest.

GOLD CUP SOCCER

Hosts Gaibandha Pourashava team reached the final of the DC Gold Cup Soccer tournament with a solitary goal victory over Naogaon Zilla Dal in the second semifinal at the Gaibandha stadium.

Prodip netted the all-important goal.

The hosts will meet with Dinajpur Zilla Dal in the Friday's final at the same venue.

BONARPARA CRICKET

Gaibandha's Jagoroni Krira Chakra defeated Chattrra Bandhu by 47 runs in Bonarpara premier cricket league at the Bonarpara Kazi Azher Ali High School ground.

Jagoroni Krira Chakra scored 105 for 6 in their stipulated ten overs.

In reply Chattrra Bandhu were all out for 58 runs.

SCHOOL CHESS

A total of twenty-six players of Class VI to X Group were sharing the lead in the 11th Standard Chartered School Chess Tournament after end of the second round at the NSC Tower auditorium lounge.

The players are Saif, Siam, Debotpal, Rupesh, Moin, Aninda, Sagar, Fazle, Mahbub, Amir, Bappi, Emon, Nazmus, Sharief, Zoar, Faruk, Aornob, Raju, Rakib, Robin, Sagar Sarkar, Saiful, Sharier, Shubam, Sudipta and Zahid.

In the girl's section, a total of 17 players were sharing lead with maximum two points. The players are Ahely, Protiva, Tani, Asmita, Santa, Sweta, Tisha, Munia, Amena, Ananya, Doly, Fahmida, Rokeya, Sabernun, Sumia, Sadia and Zohora.

17 players were sharing lead in the Class KG to V Group with maximum two points each. The players are Hritik, Deebdeb, Sayantan, Ajzal, Alfaz, Arman, Faisal, Moksed, Rifatul, Faruk, Rafsan.

Strauss expects better show

AFP, London

England captain Andrew Strauss expects his side to correct the mistakes they made during last week's drawn opener against Australia when the second Ashes Test starts at Lord's here on Thursday.

England clung on for a draw in Cardiff thanks to a last-wicket stand between James Anderson and Monty Panesar, who batted out the final 40 minutes.

But the game itself was dominated by Australia, who scored 674 runs for the loss of just six wickets and took 19 wickets themselves on a slow pitch.

Four England players -- Ravi Bopara, Matt Prior, Graeme Swann and Stuart Broad -- were making their Ashes debuts but Strauss believes they and the rest of the side will be better for the great escape in Cardiff.

"On that first day there were a fair amount of nerves in our dressing room because of the length of the build-up and the fact it is a very different series to other series we play in," Strauss told reporters here on Tuesday.

Second Ashes Test starts today

FROM PAGE 17

good fast bowler and has a very good record for England, so he was always in the frame in our minds."

England captain Andrew Strauss is known to favour a five-man attack and, having seen his bowlers manage just six wickets between them as Australia piled up 674 in Cardiff, will not want to lack for options in the field.

But if Flintoff is ruled out and replaced by a bowler that would mean England had lengthened their tail.

Alternatively, they could bring back batsman Ian Bell.

But after a first Test where three England batsmen got to fifty but did not go on to a century in a match where Australia scored four hundreds, Flower and the selectors may give the top order a collective chance to redeem themselves.

"Certainly, batting-wise we didn't cash in when we had the opportunities and bowling-wise we found it hard to put them under pressure," Flowers said.

But he took some heart

from England's rearguard action, saying: "We were outplayed but we take a bit of confidence from the fight we showed."

Star batsman Kevin Pietersen, who top-scored for England with 69, was widely criticised for getting out sweeping to Australia off-spinner Nathan Hauritz but Flower said the South African-born shotmaker should not carry the can for the side's slack of runs.

"I don't think you can just isolate him even though I know he's the most high-profile batsman."

Australia, who saw Ponting lead from the front in Wales with a superb 150, have not lost a Test at Lord's since 1934.

They are again set to be without fast bowler Brett Lee, ruled out in Cardiff because of a rib injury.

The Ashes holders may well stick with the same side although seam bowler Stuart Clark could come into contention.

Form and history favour Australia and, as their simi-

larly defiant last-wicket stand at Old Trafford four years ago, which was followed by an England win, showed, a battling draw is no guarantee of future success.

"We played exceptionally well throughout the first Test," said Hauritz.

"The batting was outstanding and we took 19 wickets."

How England would like to be able to say the same.

TEAMS

ENGLAND (from): Andrew Strauss (captain), Alastair Cook, Ravi Bopara, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Matt Prior, Andrew Flintoff, Stuart Broad, Graeme Swann, James Anderson, Monty Panesar, Ian Bell, Graham Onions, Stephen Harmison.

AUSTRALIA (probable): Phillip Hughes, Simon Katich, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Michael Hussey, Marcus North, Brad Haddin, Mitchell Johnson, Nathan Hauritz, Peter Siddle, Ben Hilfenhaus.

Umpires: Billy Doctrove and Rudi Koertzen.

No stopping of sledging

AFP, London

Before this Ashes series it was reported Australia players, almost as famous for their verbal taunts as their on-field brilliance, had received letters banning them from 'sledging'.

But any lingering doubt was set aside by tyro fast bowler Peter Siddle here at Lord's on Tuesday when, speaking ahead of the second Ashes Test, he said with a grin: "If it was sent, I don't think we've received it yet."

In truth, for generations of English players the notion of their oldest opponents ceasing to 'sledge' always seemed as likely as Australia cricketers ditching their distinctive baggy green caps.

Australia after all were the team whose former captain Steve Waugh had elevated the art of verbal abuse into 'mental disintegration'.

By contrast, one of the most quoted on-field remarks by an England cricketer was when veteran batsman Colin Cowdrey, summoned out as a replacement for the 1974/75 Ashes tour of Australia, stunned firebrand quick Jeff Thomson during the Perth Test by saying: "Good morning. We haven't met. My name is Cowdrey."

Any notion Ricky Ponting's current side had decided to follow the example of Australia tennis great Rod Laver whose 'chat', in the course of a career that saw him twice win the coveted Grand Slam, extended to the odd muttered rebuke to himself, was quickly putright.

Cricket Australia had sent its players guidance warning them to be on their best behaviour while on tour in Britain and pointing out they would be public figures both on and off the field.

It was issued after a survey of Australian cricket fans revealed public concern regarding the team's conduct following several high-profile spats, notably involving India.

However, this did not extend to a specific 'sledging' ban.

Siddle is fast becoming the Australia quick opposition crowds love to hate and he relishes his role as the pantomime villain.

Not that there is anything comical about his bowling.

The 24-year-old Victorian may have only taken three wickets during the drawn first Test in Cardiff last week but performed with commendable hostility on a soul-destroying surface for fast bowlers.

Siddle several times hit tailender Graeme Swann with some stinging deliveries and in the absence of Brett Lee, whose rib injury looks as if it will also rule him out of the second Test, which starts at Lord's on Thursday, added some valuable aggression to the Australia attack.

"It is just part of me. I like to go about that kind of stuff," Siddle said.

"We found that was a bit of a weakness, but he (Swann) toughed it out and he stuck around for a while. It was just good fun."

He added: "That is when I am bowling at my best, when I am fired up and charging in. The sooner it happens the better it is for the team."

Ponting awaits Harmy

Cricket

AFP, London

Australia captain Ricky Ponting believes England will recall fast bowler Stephen Harmison for the second Ashes Test here at Lord's.

The Durham quick has not played for England since being dropped in the Caribbean earlier this year and missed last week's drawn Ashes opener in Cardiff where Australia piled up a huge 674 for six declared.

Harmison has ostensibly been included as cover for Andrew Flintoff, who is struggling with a knee injury.

But Ponting, who still bears the scar of being hit on the cheek by a Harmison bouncer which drew blood during the first Ashes Test at Lord's in 2005, said he expected both fast bowlers to play come Thursday's start if fit.

"I reckon Harmison will play, yes," Ponting told reporters at Lord's on Tuesday. "I think he will play even if Flintoff is fit, they'll play them both if they can."

"I think these conditions will suit him more than what the ones down at Cardiff would have done. I had the feeling he was very close to selection down there," Ponting added.

He explained Harmison would add a "bit of hostility" to England's attack, saying: "Being as tall as he is, and the sort of bang it into the wicket bowler he is, you don't get too many pitched up."

He's a bit of a Curtly Ambrose type bowler in that regard. So when you get conditions like this where it will probably bounce a little bit more his style of bowling becomes pretty difficult."

Harmison took six wickets against Australia the week before the first Test playing for the England Lions at Worcester, where he twice dismissed unorthodox opener Phillip Hughes with short deliveries.

"There was a lot of how he bowled in Worcester, and some people felt he should have been picked," Ponting said. "But I think our guys overall did a reasonable job and played him pretty well."

As for the scar on his face, Ponting said: "I haven't noticed it for five years. I guess they are the battle scars you end up with after playing a

sport like this for as long as I have. I've got a few others as well."

This match is being played on the same pitch as in 2005, where Australia were bowled out for 190 on the first day only to have England seven wickets down before stumps. Australia eventually won by 239 runs only to lose the series 2-1.

"It was an amazing day's Test cricket," Ponting recalled. "Hopefully, if we get the chance to bat first again it will be a slightly different result (in terms of Australia's first innings)."

Australia haven't lost a Test at Lord's since 1934.

"There is a great feel around the place, and all the history, and the very proud record that Australia have had here for so long makes you feel good about the place when you arrive," Ponting said.

"Everyone has been looking forward to playing here, and what it means to a lot of our younger guys in particular to play here."

"I think this is the first time at the ground for Nathan Hauritz and Peter Siddle. I had to show Sids the way round (in the pavilion and on to the field), he kept getting lost -- 'out through that door, mate, through that Long Room there' -- It's very exciting for them."

Ponting is one of cricket's all-time great batsmen yet he has never made a Test century at Lord's, where his highest score is 42.

But he looked in prime form while making 150 in Cardiff, where England only salvaged a draw thanks to a last-wicket stand between tailenders James Anderson and Monty Panesar.

Asked what it would mean to see his name on the Lord's honours board, the 34-year-old Ponting said: "It would be nice. I've played two Tests here and not done very well at all."

"I've made a one-day hundred here on the last tour, which was a great feeling. I've just got to carry on from last week. It's up to me to lead the way with the bat again when I get the chance."

After being denied victory by just one wicket in Cardiff, Ponting indicated Australia would pick the same team.

"We haven't finalised our XI yet but there weren't too many weaknesses in what we did last week so it would be pretty hard to make too many changes."

Sangakkara cautious

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Kumar Sangakkara on Wednesday celebrated victory over Pakistan in his first series as Sri Lanka's captain with a warning to teammates to guard against future setbacks.

"It's true you have got to enjoy the good times, but you need to make sure that the team is prepared to face the bad times and those bad times don't last long," said Sangakkara.

"It's going to get a lot tougher, but we have got the ability to get better and the amount of work we do on the field and off the field with our focus on cricket is going to be the key."

Sri Lanka clinched the three-match series with a seven-wicket victory in the second Test on Tuesday after the temperamental tourists suffered a spectacular collapse.

Pakistan, sitting pretty at 285-1 just before lunch on the third day, crashed to 320 all out after the break to leave Sri Lanka a victory target of 171 on a good batting pitch at the P. Sara Oval.

Sri Lanka cruised home with two days to spare to record their first home series win over Pakistan after losing three of their five previous series and drawing the other two.

Sangakkara, 31, took over as captain after Mahela Jayawardene stepped down in March to concentrate on his batting and allow his successor to build a team for the 2011 World Cup.

Sangakkara, a long-time deputy to Jayawardene, showed he was cut out for the job with imaginative leadership in the two Tests.

His use of left-arm spinner Rangana Herath in the two Tests in the absence of the injured Muttiah Muralidaran bordered on a reckless gamble, but it paid off handsomely both times.

On a seamer-friendly wicket in the first Test

at Galle, Sangakkara threw the ball to Herath on the fourth morning when Pakistan needed only 97 runs to win with eight wickets in hand.

Herath removed the two overnight batsmen, Mohammad Yousuf and Salman Butt, with his first four deliveries and finished with a career-best 4-15 as Pakistan lost their last eight wickets for 46 runs.

On Tuesday, Sangakkara handed the new ball to spinner Herath, instead of his fast bowlers, and the left-armer once again dismissed Yousuf with his second delivery to trigger another Pakistani collapse.

Herath finished with 5-99 and seamer Nuwan Kulasekera took 4-37 as Pakistan lost their last nine wickets for 35 runs after debutant Fawad Alam's superb 168 and Younus' 82 had put the tourists in a good position.

"We expected the spinners to get some bite off the new ball because if it landed on the shiny side it would slip through and hopefully hit the pads," said Sangakkara.

"We walked onto the ground thinking of starting with the fast bowlers from both ends, but I tossed the ball to Rangana, who came up with a wicket in his first over."

"No matter who bowled, we needed someone to stand up and do something special for us. Luckily we had two people, Kulasekera and Herath, who bowled superbly in partnership."

Sangakkara, whose team lost to Pakistan in the World Twenty20 final in England last month, hopes to complete a 3-0 rout when the third Test starts at the Sinhalese Sports Club here on July 20.

But he said he was worried that Sri Lankan batting had not touched 300 in the four innings so far.

"We have got a lot of work to do with the batting," he said. "Everyone is batting well, but we just need to go on and bat for hours and hours."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 Pent up
- 6 Rook
- 12 Reproductive cell
- 13 Put on a pedestal
- 14 Gladiatorial
- 15 Zip-out portion
- 16 Diner's card
- 17 Mah-jong piece
- 19 Had something
- 20 Whirl
- 22 Samovar
- 24 Pair from Connecticut?
- 27 Rearranged wd.
- 29 Fairy tale beast
- 32 Noted horn-blower
- 35 Glitch
- 36 Celebrate gustatorily
- 37 List-ending abbr.

DOWN

- 1 Give a darn
- 2 Congregation's cry
- 3 Category
- 4 Schedule
- 5 Fated thing
- 6 Poker tactic
- 7 Farewell
- 8 Family member
- 9 Percussion instrument
- 10 Fast time?
- 11 Periphery
- 12 Whale group
- 18 Trapped
- 21 Crony

23 Filch from

- 24 Sprite
- 25 Zero
- 26 Connectivity
- 28 Sunk
- 30 Same old
- 31 Common Mkt.
- 33 Teeter-totter
- 34 Verily
- 39 Sports-caster
- 41 Photocopier need
- 42 Hearty quaffs
- 43 Traditional tales
- 45 Incite
- 47 Carry on
- 48 Leave a good impression?
- 49 Bishopric
- 51 Asian auto-maker