

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 there 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

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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

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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

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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

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was IIDFC who put nine past a hapless Securex.

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

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 Australian 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.

Harrison has sent both fast bowlers to play come Thursday's start if fit.

"I reckon Harrison 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 Harrison 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 Curly 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."

Harrison took six wickets against Australia in 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 made 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 for the battle scars you end up with after playing a

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.

Harrison 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."

"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.

He used his 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 14-15 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-arter once again dismissed Yousuf with his second delivery to trigger another Pakistani collapse.

Herath finished with 5-99 and seamer Nuwan Kulasekara took 4-37 as Pakistan lost their last nine wickets for 35 runs after debutant Fawad Alam's superb 168 and Younis' 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, Kulasekara 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	38	Unruly	DOWN	23	Filch from
1	Pent up	group	1	Give a	Sprite
6	Rook	40 Without	2	darn	25 Zero
12	Reproductive	ice	24	Congregation's	Connecticut
13	cell	42 TV alien	25	cut	cut
14	Put on a	"I Love	26	cry	city
15	pedestal	You, Man"	28	Sunk	
16	venues	star	30	Same	old
17	Zip-out	46 Mined-	5	abrv.	thing
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19	Diner's	matter?	7	Poker	Mkt.
20	card	50 Feast	8	tactic	Teeter-
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23	piece	52 Hardly	35	sion	caster
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25	something	54 Mistaken	37	45	burger
26	Whirl	55 From	38	46	Photo-
27	Samovar	what	39	47	copier
28	Pair from	place	40	48	need
29	Connecticut?	56 Tranquil	41	49	Hearty
30	Rear-	57 Home-	50	51	quaffs
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