

Kapil not leaving ICL

AFP, New Delhi

Retired cricket great Kapil Dev will not sever ties with a rebel Twenty20 league despite an amnesty offer by the Indian cricket board, media reported Thursday.

Dev, India's only World Cup winning captain and one of the game's great all-rounders, heads the Indian Cricket League (ICL), which is struggling to keep afloat after being deserted by players and officials alike.

Last month, dozens of players and support staff quit the ICL to accept an amnesty offer from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

But Dev said he had no plans to quit the doomed league.

"Look, on paper at least, the ICL still exists," Dev was quoted as saying by The Telegraph.

"I'm not hurt that so many have gone back to the BCCI's fold. It's a question of their future and if somebody wants to play for the country, then who are we to stop him?"

"But, yes, they had been intimidated."

ICL players were banned from official cricket around the world at the behest of the powerful BCCI, which organises the Indian Premier League, its own Twenty20 competition.

"I know the list of those who've returned to the BCCI includes some very dear friends, but I don't hold any grudges," Dev said.

Koertzen's century

CRICINFO, London

Rudi Koertzen, the South African umpire, will become the second official after Jamaican Steve Bucknor to stand in a 100 Tests at the Lord's Test starting on Thursday.

"It's a huge personal achievement and a dream come true," Koertzen said. The achievement comes less than a week after he became the first umpire to stand in 200 one-day games.

Bonarpara

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runs and was declared man-of-the-match.

In the second match Simultar were all out for 51.

TBS Kira Chakka struggled during the chase and only managed to overhaul the total in the last ball of the innings for the loss of nine wickets.

Shawon of TBS scored highest 20 run and was declared man-of-the-match.

Not a 'home' really!

Cricket

AFP, London

England headed into the second match of the Ashes series here at Lord's knowing it was 75 years since they last won a Test against their oldest rivals at the 'home of cricket'.

In 1934 it needed an exceptional solo effort to see off the might of an Australia side whose top four included Don Bradman, Test cricket's greatest run-scorer, as they won against their oldest rivals at Lord's for the first time since 1896.

Fortunately for England they had in Hedley Verity, one of cricket's most outstanding left-arm spinners, someone who took 15 wickets in the match for 104 runs as the home side won by an innings and 38 runs.

England first made 440 which featured 120 from wicketkeeper Les Ames, who with Verity's Yorkshire colleague Maurice Leyland (109) put on 129 for the sixth wicket.

The 29-year-old Verity then captured the prize wicket of Bradman, caught and bowled for 36.

But Australia were still soundly placed at 192 for two as the match entered the weekend.

However, these were the days of uncovered wickets and heavy rain turned the pitch into a 'slow turner'. Only opener Bill Brown, who made 105, scored more than 37 as Verity took seven for 61.

Australia were sent in again by England captain Bob Wyatt, after failing to avoid the follow-on by just seven runs.

Bradman, caught behind for 13, again fell cheaply to the left-armed, as Australia were bowled out for 118 with Verity taking seven for 61 and 14 wickets in all on the third day.

But this was not a one-off performance in the manner of Bob Massie, the Australia swing bowler who 38 years later took 16 wickets on his Test debut at Lord's but then faded from view almost as quickly as he'd risen.

In 40 Tests, Verity took 144 wickets at an average of under 25 apiece and ten years of first-class cricket yielded 1,956 wickets at 14.87 runs each.

No wonder his obituary in cricket almanack Wisden read: "Judged by any standard, Verity was a great bowler."

"The balance of the run up, the high ease of the left-handed action, the scrupulous length, the pensive variety, all proclaimed the master."

"He combined nature with art to a degree not equalled by any other English bowler of our time."

Less than 10 years after his triumph at Lord's, Verity was dead, one of several leading cricketers killed during World War II.

A captain in the British Army, Verity died of his wounds in a prisoner of war camp in Italy two months following his 38th birthday after leading his company in an attack on German positions in Catania, Sicily.

The news of his death came on September 1, 1943, exactly four years after he had played his last match for Yorkshire and, at Hove, taken seven Sussex wickets for nine runs in one innings.

"Verity showed, as he was so sure to do, that rare courage which both calculates and inspires," Wisden said.

Flintoff felicitated

Cricket

AFP, London

Former England players and coaches Thursday hailed Andrew Flintoff as one of the greatest players of his generation, a day after he announced his retirement.

Flintoff, 31, cited the strain of constantly coming back from injury as he announced he was quitting Test cricket.

Bowling great Ian Botham said Flintoff showed he was the one of the greatest all-rounders in 2005 when England defeated Australia to regain the Ashes for the first time in 18 years.

"Throughout the summer he was the leader of the pack and was able to do almost anything he wanted on a cricket field," Botham wrote in the Daily Mirror newspaper.

"His batting, bowling and fielding were in perfect harmony and that can never be taken away from him," he said.

But he said Flintoff's deci-

sion to walk away from Test cricket at the end of the current Ashes series was unsurprising.

"Since then (2005) the body has let him down and you can't keep shoving needles into a bloke and expect him to be fine."

Flintoff has suffered a series of injuries that have blighted his career and he now has to overcome a knee problem if he wants to play in the second Ashes Test starting Thursday.

Michael Vaughan said Flintoff caused him to have more management meetings than anybody else during his time as England captain.

"But the match turning, series-winning performances that he put in more than outweighed the odd difficulty he caused," Vaughan wrote in the Daily Telegraph newspaper.

Flintoff was dropped from the England team to face Canada at the World Cup in 2007, and stripped of the vice-captaincy, after staying out late drinking and riding a

pedalo in the early hours.

Ex-England coach Duncan Fletcher wrote in the Guardian newspaper that Flintoff's injuries after 2005 meant he plateaued as a force at the international level.

But he concluded: "It all comes back to the same thing: make what you like of some of Flintoff's off-field behaviour but on the field he will be sorely missed."

WC planning

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Bangladesh are yet to confirm the venues," he said.

He informed that the schedule will be confirmed and announced in due course after getting the ICC ranking.

"On the basis of ICC ranking the participating 14 teams would be split into two groups. We will try our best to arrange the schedule in a way so that the host country could play at home most of their matches," he said.

Anam believes that the first step was taken after the unveiling of the logo of the tournament in Mumbai on Tuesday and the organisers are confident of the success of the mega event with operational plans in place to become effective from the start of August.

Protesters call

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Although there are no written or signed contracts in place for these two series, the WICB has decided to pay on the basis of verbal agreements and written undertakings which they had with WIPA.

"At present, the situation remains the same," said Cameron, who is also chairman of the WICB's negotiating committee. "We are not going to negotiate under duress and that is final."

"What we have done however, is to make arrangements to pay the players for their services."

"Presently, the wages for the England tour and the India tour are being processed and we will get it to the players as soon as possible."

Cameron noted that the WICB would not however, be paying salaries for the Twenty20 Cup until the regional governing body has received their share of the purse from the International Cricket Council, the sport's World governing body.

"When we get it, we will pay the players," he said.

Cameron also dismissed reports that players who were interested in playing for the West Indies had until Wednesday to apologise and declare their availability in order to qualify for selection to the squad for the ICC Champions Trophy.

"I don't know where that came from," he said.

"We are not aware of this, but what I can say is that we have to submit a list of names for the selectors to choose a group of players to prepare for the ICC Champions Trophy in South Africa in September."

The West Indies selectors are to meet next week to select a provisional squad of 30 players for the competition, which will then be trimmed down to 15 a few weeks later.

Akhtar doubtful for Lanka ODIs

AFP, Karachi

The chances of controversial paceman Shoaib Akhtar staging a comeback in Pakistan's one-day series against Sri Lanka plummeted after an official said Thursday he failed to show for a fitness test.

"He could not come because of his mother's illness and since his fitness and match form was not ascertained the status will be conveyed to the team management," Wasim Bari, Pakistan's interim chief selector, told AFP.

Bari said he would consult members of a newly appointed selection committee before leaving Friday for Sri Lanka, where he will seek input from team management on announcing the one-day squad.

Bari was appointed interim committee chief after the Pakistan Cricket Board disbanded the senior and junior selection committees last month.

A five-man selection committee, bolstered by two co-opted members and announced earlier this week, will start working from August 1.

Pakistan, 2-0 down in a three-Test series in Sri Lanka, will play the third Test in Colombo from July 20. The five-match, one-day series starts July 30.

The series will be followed by a Twenty20 match.

Akhtar, who was withdrawn from Pakistan's World Twenty20 squad last month after he developed genital warts, claimed he was ready to stage a comeback in the one-day series against Sri Lanka.

The 33-year-old paceman has been plagued by injury and disciplinary problems, and has not been a regular team member since 2007.

Tigers chase

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recent Caribbean tour and was dropped for the return trip in May.

He has become the third player who has represented the Caribbean side in recent months to ignore the West Indies Players' Association's stance, following similar decisions by Dave Bernard Jr and Darren Sammy.

Kraig Brathwaite and Andre Creary, two Under-19 players who had been included in the squad for the first Test, have been released, and will return to Jamaica to take part in the West Indies youth championship.

School chess

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Tanzina Akter Tani, Santa Thapa (Nepal), Sweta Saha (India), Tahmina Akte Tisha, Sabikun Nahar and Afrin Jahan Munia.

Six players share the lead in the Class KG-V Group with maximum three points after the 3rd round matches. They are Hritik Prasad, Debdeb Das, Sayantan Chandra, Ajaz Hossain, Rifatul Islam and Rafsan Bin Omar.

The fourth round matches start today at the same venue.

Freddie's focus on ODIs

Cricket

CRICINFO, London

Andrew Flintoff believes that his impending retirement from Test cricket will enable him to focus on becoming the best one-day cricketer in the world, and he still harbours ambitions of playing for England in not only the 2011 World Cup in the subcontinent, but the 2015 tournament in Australia and New Zealand as well.

"I've missed two out of the last four years, so I've not got that rhythm of playing cricket day-in day-out," said Flintoff. "But as a bowler, apart from the body, I'm actually getting better, and I can nearly bat again. My best years might be in front of me, but not in this form of the game."

In order to maximise both the cricket he plays and the earnings he can make from the game, however, Flintoff is expected to secure a raft of short-term contracts which could lead to him playing in a variety of leagues all around the world.

He recently held talks with Queensland, over the possibility of signing a short-term contract for Australia's annual Big Bash competition, while he currently has one year to run on both his lucrative IPL \$1.55million contract with Chennai, which made him, pro-rata, the most expensive overseas signing in the competition, and his English domestic deal with Lancashire, with whom he has yet to discuss his life after Tests.

There is no chance, however, that he will be persuaded back into the four-day grind of the County Championship, and instead he is likelier to feature in

Lancashire's marquee events, most notably the P20, which gets underway next season.

"I've not spoken to Lancs yet, but when I get back up north I'll sit down with the chairman and Moorsley (coach Peter Moorsley), and see what they want from me and what I'd like to do as well. County cricket is tough playing four days, so that's something we'll probably have to have a look at."

If his words gave the impression that Flintoff has not given a lot of thought to the mundanity of county cricket, then Lancashire confirmed those suspicions. "The decision has come as a surprise to us," said their cricket director, Mike Watkinson. "Fred knows he has the full support of Lancashire and we are here to help him in anyway we can."

He will obviously talk to the ECB about his future and then we'll do the same, but we look forward to having a closer relationship with Fred over the coming years. Although he hasn't played much for us over the past four or five years, he loves playing for Lancashire and always brings something special to the Old Trafford dressing-room. England's loss will hopefully benefit Lancashire."

Flintoff, though, doesn't intend to be found kicking his heels in his county dressing-room too often. "There are a lot of competitions around the world, but I'm not going to grumble about too much cricket, it's something I'm fortunate to play," Flintoff said. "We may see players' careers get shorter, but so be it. It's a busy schedule ahead of us, and it's going to be taxing on a lot of bowlers."

"There's enthusiasm to go on in one-day cricket, but

there's sadness that I've finally had to give up in Test cricket in regards to my body," said Flintoff. "Nothing can fill you with as much excitement as an Ashes series -- it's on a different level to any other competition you play in. But I enjoy the shorter form, and I want to be the best I possibly can be, and focus all my energies on that."

Flintoff's desire to carry on playing for England, however, may depend on his willingness to accept a scaled-down version of the ECB central contract that he has held (with the odd hiatus) since they were first introduced in 2000. Although injury eventually forced him home early from this season's IPL, the ECB's agreement had limited even the increment-contract holders to a three-week window, which would presumably be too little, both for Flintoff himself and the IPL commissioner, Lalit Modi.

Strauss, Cook

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To bat: Collingwood, Prior, Flintoff, Broad, Swann, Onions, Anderson

Bowler O M R W
Hilfenhaus 20 10 49 1
Johnson 11 0 77 1
Siddle 11 0 47 0
Hauritz 8.3 1 26 0
North 11.3 2 41 0

AUSTRALIA: Hughes, Katich, Ponting, Clarke, Hussey, North, Haddin, Johnson, Hauritz, Siddle, Hilfenhaus

Toss: England.

Umpires: Billy Doctrove and Rudi Koertzen.

Ponting finds it funny

Cricket

AFP, London

Australia captain Ricky Ponting believes England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff announcing his Test exit during the Ashes could create an unwanted 'circus' for the home side in the rest of the series.

Flintoff, whose career has been blighted by injury, chose the eve of the second Test here at Lord's to announce he would quit the five-day game at the end of the Ashes, which conclude in August across London at The Oval.

Ponting, speaking at Lord's after Flintoff had confirmed his Test retirement, told reporters: "I think we were all a little bit surprised with it to tell you the truth."

"If he ends up playing the remainder of the series I'm sure there'll be some outside distractions for the England team to deal with no matter if Andrew wanted it that way or not."

"I've been in teams where it's happened in Australia as well and it can be distracting, not just for the person involved but for the captain as well."

Ponting said the situation England found themselves in now was similar to the one confronting Australia when Steve Waugh, his predecessor as captain, made it clear the 2003-04 series at home to India would be his last in Tests.

"They were probably similar sort of figures in either side and either country. Everyone in Australia loved everything about Steve Waugh, the way he played, the way he led the side."

"We talked long and hard before the first Test of that series and making sure it didn't turn out to be a farewell tour for Steve."

"But as hard as we tried and as hard as he tried not to make it that way, sure enough it became very much heavily focused on every-

thing he did."

He added: "We can't say yet if this will turn into a farewell tour but knowing the stature he (Flintoff) has in the game in England I can see it turning out like that."

"The fans here are very passionate about seeing Andrew Flintoff play so if they know it's the last chance to see him play here and last chance to play at Edgbaston and Headingley then there could be a circus around the ground."

Ponting, asked to assess Flintoff's worth as a player, said: "If you look at his bare statistics, they probably don't rate that flatteringly."

"But as far as someone that has an impact on the way a team plays and performs then he seems to be right up there."

"He just seems to be a guy that everyone would enjoy playing with. He's played the game in great spirit, everything he does, he's always got a smile on his face."

Last week's drawn first Ashes Test in Cardiff was Flintoff's first England appearance of the season following a knee injury. "You couldn't fault the effort he put in last week," Ponting said. "You wouldn't know he was injured."

Asked if Flintoff's decision to quit Tests was a sign that the fast-bowling all-rounder was an endangered species at the highest level given the volume of international cricket, Ponting said South Africa's Jacques Kallis was the exception that proved the rule.

"Jacques Kallis has done it pretty well, he's probably the only one that has got through. There's no doubt we are playing a lot at the moment."

"Andrew has been a superstar player for England. When they're in the middle of those glory years you have to manage them as well as you'd like and get a couple more years out of their career rather than grinding them into the ground too soon."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: POPULAR REALITY TV SERIES ABOUT SIBLINGS HAVING TO SERVE IN A SHIP'S PRISON: "BRIG BROTHER."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals T