

Jacques seeks Worcs boost

AFP, London

Former Australian opener Phil Jacques is targeting an international recall after joining up with Worcestershire for a third spell.

Jaques, who has played 11 Tests and scored a century in his last innings for Australia against the West Indies in Bridgetown in 2008, has been overlooked since then and has also been struck down with back problems.

But the 30-year-old came through the domestic season with New South Wales with no injury setbacks and is hoping a successful spell with Worcestershire will help him earn a recall to the international fold.

Jaques told Press Association Sport: "Last summer back home, I played every game for New South Wales. I was the only one to do that which was a good achievement in itself in a long season."

"It is very exciting to be back fit and hopefully I can really pile on the runs over here this year."

"I wouldn't be playing cricket if I didn't have ambitions and my ambition is to get back to the highest level you can achieve - and that is playing for Australia."

"That is why I am here. That is why I chose here rather than the Indian Premier League."

"I wanted to play county cricket, get some volume of games in and hopefully get back into the Australian side. That is the goal ahead."

Jaques admitted: "It was a bit of a weird feeling to score a 100 in my last Test and then not play again."

"But I know I can play at that level and right now it is about knocking on the door hard enough and getting the runs on the board I need and waiting for an opportunity."

"The guys who have been playing, Simon Katich and Shane Watson, have been outstanding. They have probably been our best two batsmen over the last 12 months along with Michael Clarke and Ricky Ponting."

"It is very hard to get back into that team. But I've got to go back to the drawing board, score lots of runs and wait for an opportunity."

"I will be looking to get back to converting decent scores into hundreds and I hope I can do that at Worcestershire. The body has held up. I have had no injury problems and the backs are getting stronger by the day."

Serena opts out of Charleston

AP, Charleston

Serena Williams has withdrawn from the Family Circle Cup because of the left knee injury that has sidelined her since she won the Australian Open.

The green clay tournament begins this weekend and will be played without three of the world's top 30 women's tennis players. Top-ranked Williams, 2009 champion Sabine Lisicki, and three-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova also pulled out Thursday.

Williams said in a statement released by the tournament that her knee "has not fully healed" and that she looks forward to "returning to the WTA Tour in Europe."

Lisicki is out because of a left ankle injury. Sharapova announced her withdrawal due to her continuing recovery from an elbow injury.

Sheikh

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Sheikh Russel took a seventh-minute lead through striker Rony, who did not mistake to place a Rajon Mia cross from the right home. Moroccan playmaker Jamal doubled the margin through an unexpected goal in the 30th minute when his cross for Rony directly found the back of the Arambagh net.

Two minutes into the second half, Salah made it 3-0 with a spectacular shot taken from the left corner of the box and he widened the margin in the 49th availing a throw-in from Rajon Mia.

Rony struck his league's eighth and team's fifth goal in the 64th minute before Arambagh reduced the margin to 5-1 in the 69th minute through a Kabir Hossain strike.

Abdullah Parvez sealed the fate of the game five minutes from time with a spectacular drive from outside the box.

Mashrafe

FROM PAGE 17

Sultans' co-owner Rizwan Bin Farouq also informed that Dipu Roy Chowdhury will coach the side while former selectors Faruque Ahmed and Athar Ali Khan will be part of the team management.

Brac Bank will be the team sponsor while the other co-owners are Latif Khan, Farid Khan, Masih Malek Chowdhury and Mohammad A. Momen.



Maruf Ahmed (C) of Sheikh Russel tries to control the ball during their Bangladesh League clash against Arambagh at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Durham eye hattrick

Cricket

AFP, London

Durham will bid to become the first side since Yorkshire in the 1960s to win three successive titles when a new, much-changed English county season begins Friday.

The usual raft of overseas players, including Andrew Symonds, Adam Gilchrist and Shahid Afridi, will add spice to a season that makes its earliest ever start and which has been revamped in an attempt to bring the crowds back.

While the County Championship remains largely in the same format and should see Nottinghamshire and Lancashire provide the sternest challenge to holders and favourites Durham in Division One, the limited-overs competitions have been tinkered with by the authorities.

The Twenty20 tournament will begin midway through the season and has been expanded so that each county plays eight home matches before the quarter-finals.

A new 40-over competition, meanwhile, replaces the 50-over format and will see Scotland, Netherlands and the ECB Unicorns take part, with the 21 teams split into three groups of seven.

England hardly has the most glamorous of visitors this summer -- Bangladesh arrive in May before a Pakistan squad in a sorry state come over in June.

England's Ashes tour to Australia at the end of the year will also be a carrot for many players dreaming of a Test call-up for the biggest series of them all.

Many of the overseas players have only signed short-term contracts with the counties, mostly to compete in the Twenty20, which will try to ride on the momentum given to the newest form of cricket by the success of the Indian Premier League.

Sussex, the reigning Twenty20 Cup champions after their win over Somerset in the 2009 final, have recruited West Indies' Dwayne Smith and Sri Lanka's Tillakaratne Dilshan for the tournament.

Surrey will hope the signing of explosive Australian all-rounder Symonds will spark them into life, although how Rory Hamilton-Brown -- at just 22 the county's youngest ever captain -- manages to cope with the increased burden of the armband remains to be seen.

Former Australia wicketkeeper Gilchrist will play for Middlesex in the Twenty20 group stages, while Brad Hodge (Leicestershire), Pakistan duo Afridi, Abdul Razzaq (both Hampshire) and Australia paceman Shaun Tait (Glamorgan) will also provide added entertainment.

Durham may struggle in limited-overs competition but they are being tipped to rule the four-day version once again.

They went through the league unbeaten last year to sweep to the title, which they also won in 2008 for their first ever county championship trophy.

They have a potent mix of experience and talented youth players, more and more of whom are making the step up to the England team, such as Liam Plunkett and Graham Onions.

Paceman Steve Harmison's international exile will suit Durham just fine while coach Geoff Cook will be hoping Australian Michael Di Venuto's superb form with the bat continues into 2010.

If they do claim another title, Durham will become only the fourth side to win three English championships on the bounce.

Nottinghamshire, captained by Chris Read and with overseas stars Hashim Amla and David Hussey in their ranks, will be desperate to go one better after finishing as runners-up the past two years, while Lancashire are looking to end their 76-year title drought.

It will also be interesting to see how former England seamer Matthew Hoggard, controversially released by Yorkshire and snapped up by Leicestershire, does as captain at Grace Road.

The season began unofficially last week when Durham played the MCC in a traditional campaign curtain-raiser. This time, however, the match took place in Abu Dhabi, away from Lord's for the first time and complete with a pink ball and floodlights.

'Fidel won't be rushed'

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

Ottis Gibson, the West Indies coach, has said that he will not rush injured Fidel Edwards back into action because he doesn't want to put the fast bowler's "whole career at risk".

Edwards is recovering from recent back surgery and hasn't played for West Indies since the World Twenty20 in June 2009.

"We can't afford to rush him [Edwards] because, if we rush him and something happens, it could put his whole career at risk and we don't want to do that," Gibson told CMC.

"He is somebody that we hope - he is only 28 years old - fully recovers from his operation and comes back to play a major part for us in the next couple of years."

Though Edwards hasn't played for West Indies since his injury in the World Twenty20, he turned out for his IPL franchise Deccan Chargers in the Champions League Twenty20 in India last October. He returned from the tournament injured and wasn't given a contract by the West Indies board.

"He abandoned it [WICB's remedial programme] and went to play in the Champions League in India and got injured there," WICB chief executive Ernest Hilaire had said. "We now need to sort that out."

Edwards then missed the tour of Australia and underwent surgery and Gibson said he was currently undergoing rehabilitation. "He had a back operation sometime in December or January. He's doing a rehab programme with Jacqui King the physiotherapist," Gibson said.

"Once you have had a back injury and it requires an operation, it's a very slow process sometimes. So he needs to take his time with that. He is in good hands with Jacqui King."

Hosts' hopes

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

Attempts came off the bar and Pakistan goalkeeper Asif Ali thwarted a lot of attempts.

Pakistan winger Mohammad Jubair led the way scoring highest 11 goals followed by Mubeen Ashraf, who scored nine goals. Sudhan Barua was Bangladesh highest scorer with nine goals while Imdadul made 6 goals.

Bangladesh coach Kamrul Islam Kiron blamed the lack of experience for going down as well as the players' failure to follow the coach's instructions.

"You saw how the players got jittery amongst them after making mistakes as well as they failed to follow my instructions," Kiron said. "Their wingers were very nice and they took full advantage of them."

Pakistan coach Tahir Hamid said they were confident of winning the game and thought that the fragile backline of the hosts made the task easy for them.

Garcia floors Clijsters

AP, Andalusia

Kim Clijsters lost to 258th-ranked Beatriz Garcia Vidagany of Spain 7-5, 4-6, 6-4 in the second round of the Andalusia Open on Thursday.

Clijsters, fresh off her second title win of the year at Miami, was broken nine times in a seesaw match in which both players struggled on serve.

Warner NSW's for 3 years

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

Two days after missing a Cricket Australia contract, the opener David Warner has signed with New South Wales for three years to end the chances of a move interstate.

Despite being a fixture of Australia's Twenty20 side, Warner is not a first-choice Sheffield Shield player for the Blues and appeared in two 2nd XI games during the summer.

There had been talk Warner, 23, would leave the first-class action but he has decided to stay at home. "It's great news," he said. "I am very much looking forward to continuing my playing career at NSW. I have played all my junior and senior cricket here and I would like to perform well for my home state."

Warner doesn't want to remain pigeon-holed as a limited-overs star and hopes to be part of the New South Wales tradition of producing "great cricketers". Dave Gilbert, New South Wales' chief executive, said Warner has a very promising future.

"We are obviously thrilled to have secured his services for the next three years," Gilbert said. "His performances over the past 18 months in limited-overs cricket have been exceptional and, at times, stunning. He is determined to make his mark in the longer form of the game and Cricket NSW will provide him with the necessary support to achieve his aims."

In the Sheffield Shield over the summer he scored 89 runs in three games and 195 in eight FR Cup appearances. It is in the shortest form that he excels and his strike-rate was an amazing 232.87 in five Twenty20 domestic fixtures, which came after he helped the Blues to the inaugural Champions League trophy in India. He is currently with Delhi in the IPL and has signed with Middlesex for their Twenty20 Cup campaign in England.

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MSC one-up

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

FROM PAGE 17

Abahani searched for a second and had Manik not missed the easiest chance of the match 10 minutes from time, they might have finished the match with a point.

Saker named England bowling coach

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

The former Victoria fast bowler, David Saker, has been named as England's new bowling coach, after a lengthy search for a replacement for Ottis Gibson, who took charge of West Indies in February this year. Saker joins the ECB following a six-year tenure as assistant coach of Victoria, the state he represented at first-class level on 49 occasions.

In his role as Victoria assistant coach, Saker helped to guide the team to the past two Sheffield Shield titles, as well as four domestic Twenty20 titles in the past five years. He served as head coach of the Delhi Daredevils during last year's Champions League, following an assistant coach's role with the franchise throughout the initial two seasons of the IPL.

Saker, 43, debuted for Victoria in 1994 before going on to play 23 first-class matches for Tasmania from 2000-2004. He returned to Victoria in the role of assistant coach and coordinator of Cricket Victoria's high performance unit, working closely with the likes of Australian internationals Peter Siddle, Dirk Nannes, Clint McKay and Andrew McDonald.

It is expected that Saker will link up with the England team in time for the forthcoming ICC World Twenty20 in the Caribbean at the end of the month. "I've held ambitions of coaching at international level so the prospect of working with the England team is something I'm very much looking forward to and excited by," he said. "I've really enjoyed my time as assistant coach with the Bushrangers and I'm now aiming to take my coaching to the next level with the England team."

Saker's duties will include guiding the fortunes of the established frontline bowlers, Stuart Broad and James Anderson, as well as working on the development of young prospects such as Steven Finn, Ajmal Shahzad and Chris Woakes.

"I believe I can offer the England bowlers a great deal and oversee their development at the highest level," he said. "This role will be challenging but there's no question I'm looking forward to working with the impressive crop of bowlers currently in and around the England team."

England's head coach, Andy Flower, said "David has a wealth of playing and coaching experience and will be a valuable addition to the England set-up. His record with Victoria in recent times is second to none and he has managed the development of a number of top-class fast bowlers."

"We were sorry to see Ottis Gibson leave the position but we believe we've found an excellent successor and look forward to David joining us in the lead up to what will be an exciting and challenging year ahead."

Saker was selected from a shortlist of five candidates - including Allan Donald, who worked with the England team briefly in 2007; the former Australian fast bowler, Craig McDermott; Dougie Brown, the Warwickshire assistant coach, and Stuart Barnes, a bowling coach at Gloucestershire and the ECB academy. His appointment means that Bruce French, who works with England's wicketkeepers, is the only regular member of the coaching staff with an English background.

Hugh Morris, the managing director of England cricket, said: "We're pleased to appoint David Saker as England fast bowling coach after an exhaustive recruitment process that included a number of world-class candidates. David's credentials are exceptional and we believe we've secured an outstanding bowling coach who'll take up a vital full-time role within the England team management."

Suman steps up

CricketInfo, undated

Cricket

The IPL's cap of four foreign players for each team has been of much benefit for those Indian players short of exposure at the international level, particularly in this edition. Deccan Chargers, however, had been let down in that regard, until T Suman stepped up against Bangalore.

His unbeaten 78 was a refreshing change for a side that has relied excessively on foreign players, especially in the batting; two of those, Adam Gilchrist and Andrew Symonds, guided him during the course of decisive partnerships that broke Deccan's five-match losing streak and dealt a blow to Bangalore's hopes of a semifinal berth.

Suman's promotion to No.3 on Thursday put an end to the embarrassment Deccan have endured as other teams have produced match-winning stars. While Suman's record prior to this game was modest, the rest of the Indian contingent in the Deccan squad, except for Rohit Sharma and Pragnan Ojha who've played for India this year, had done little of note.

Anirudh Singh, Monish Mishra and Venugopal Rao average 7.40 between them; on the other hand, Kedar Jadhav and Pradeep Sangwan have boosted Delhi Daredevils; Saurabh Tiwary and Ambati Rayudu have been finds for Mumbai Indians. Naman Ojha, Manish Pandey and MVijay are established openers for their respective teams.

Suman's role had been to play quickfire cameos in the lower middle-order, but today, in the presence of Gilchrist and Symonds, he dropped anchor. He began in steady fashion, with a couple of edges off cross-batted strokes, but when his vastly experienced partners took the lead in clearing the field, Suman proved adept at churning the singles, while dealing harshly with length deliveries. The time-outs, and the resulting consultations with the think-tank also played a part.

Gilchrist took off in the eighth over of Deccan's chase, smacking Jacques Kallis for 15, and initiated a surge in the scoring rate that had, until then, hovered around six an over. Suman flattered in the next over against Anil Kumble, slotting at a short delivery and getting an inside edge just wide of the stumps. Following the time-out at the end of that over, Suman rarely played an irresponsible shot.

He picked out the straight boundary and the gap between long-on and deep midwicket for the big shots, and used the rest of the spread-out field to rotate the strike. Time and again, the Bangalore bowlers pitched the ball up and Suman opened up. Vinay Kumar and Kumble were swung for sixes over midwicket, while Dale Steyn was struck neatly over his head for four. In the game-turning 17th over, preceded by another time-out, Suman joined Symonds in Deccan's final flourish, hammering a straight six off Praveen Kumar. The bursts from his partners didn't overshadow Suman, who bettered Gilchrist and almost matched Symonds in his share of each partnership. "Gilchrist spoke to me a lot between overs and told me to keep my patience and watch the ball, which really helped me a lot," Suman said. "Not only on the field, but off the field too."

Suman's effort broke the slump, but Deccan needs more stability in their batting, with Gilchrist yet to strike big and Herschelle Gibbs sitting out for the last two games. Last year, when Deccan won the tournament, any weaknesses in the batting from the local players had been offset by a strong bowling performance led by RP Singh, who took 23 wickets and won a place in India's team for the 2009 World Twenty20. "We don't like to differentiate between Indian and international or young and old players, but we all had to lift up a bit," Gilchrist said after today's game. "The young guys coming to the party is a really important thing for all of us. Suman has only partly addressed those concerns, the rest have to step up."

Suman of Deccan Chargers goes for a big hit over the on side during their Indian Premier League match against Royal Challengers Bangalore at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Thursday.



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