

# 'Pak attack not scary'

## Trent Bridge Test starts today

### Cricket

AFP, Nottingham

Paul Collingwood is adamant there is no reason why he or his fellow England batsmen should feel daunted by the challenge of facing Pakistan's bowlers here at Trent Bridge. Pakistan go into the first of four-Test series starting Thursday on the back of a dramatic three-wicket second Test win over Australia at Headingley where they dismissed Ricky Ponting's men for just 88 in the first innings last week.

Teenage left-arm quick Mohammad Aamer has been compared to Pakistan hero Wasim Akram while Mohammad Asif was likened to Australia great Glenn McGrath by Pakistan captain Salman Butt.

Umar Gul is a fine third seamer while leg-spinner Danish Kaneria completes an admirably balanced attack.

However, Collingwood -- returning to Tests after missing England's early season 2-0 home series win over Bangladesh with a shoulder injury -- suggested Pakistan were flattered by overcast conditions at Headingley.

"I don't want to go overboard on 'these guys are the best thing since sliced bread' -- or Wasim Akram, or this, that and the other," Collingwood told reporters on Tuesday.

Nevertheless he praised the 18-year-old Aamer, saying: "When I was 18 I was just getting a contract for Durham and playing club cricket out in Australia -- so it was bare bones at the time. "Seeing a youngster like that [Aamer] is excellent for the game."

But Collingwood added: "If we can get through those periods where it can be really tricky, I think we can get on top of them. "To say they're the number one bowling attack in the world I would say was over the mark. "They have come up in conditions recently where it's done a fair bit.

"Their confidence is going to be sky-high. But we're a confident team ourselves."

England will take heart from the way an inexperienced Pakistan batting line-up lost seven wickets in pursuit of a relatively modest

victory target of 180 at Headingley.

So England's bowlers will fancy their chances at Trent Bridge, where paceman Stuart Broad and off-spinner Graeme Swann play for Nottinghamshire.

Pakistan, in what will be only opening batsman Butt's second match as captain, are likely to go in with the same side as played at Headingley.

Meanwhile England, who have a 12-man squad, are set to stick with a policy of six specialist batsmen and four bowlers that has become standard under the regime of coach Andy Flower and captain Andrew Strauss.

While this might work against Pakistan, it could leave them a bowler light in Australia where they begin the defence of the Ashes in November and where no England side has won a Test series since 1986.

"We have done very well with the three seamers, and Swann's pivotal role in giving the seamers rest -- with the wickets he gets and the pressure he puts on," Collingwood said.

"Sometimes I tend to think that when you do have four seamers one of them never bowls too much anyway.

As batsman Ian Bell is out with a series-ending foot injury, the top six appears to pick itself.

And so will, it seems, England's attack after Yorkshire seamer Ajmal Shahzad was ruled out Wednesday with an ankle injury.

Shahzad's county colleague Tim Bresnan was called into the squad as a replacement but it would now be a major surprise if England fielded an attack of anything other than James Anderson, Steven Finn, Broad and Swann.

As for Pakistan, Butt said: "We know it will not be an easy ride so we have to stick together and try our best. That's all we can do."

### TEAMS

**ENGLAND (from):** Andrew Strauss (captain), Alastair Cook, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Eoin Morgan, Matt Prior, Stuart Broad, Graeme Swann, James Anderson, Steven Finn, Tim Bresnan.

**PAKISTAN (probable):** Salman Butt (captain), Imran Farhat, Azhar Ali, Umar Amin, Umar Akmal, Shoaib Malik, Kamran Akmal, Mohammad Aamer, Umar Gul, Danish Kaneria, Mohammad Asif.

# Mushie in favour of Butt-Younis combo

### Cricket

AFP, Nottingham

Mushtaq Ahmed has urged Pakistan to persist with the combination of captain Salman Butt and coach Waqar Younis.

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Mushtaq, now England's spin bowling coach, will find himself on the opposite side to his compatriots when a four-Test series gets underway at Trent Bridge here on Thursday.

But he insists his advice is heartfelt nonetheless.

Butt jumped into what has long been the hottest of hotseats when he became Pakistan's latest captain at Headingley last week.

However, the opening batsman promptly led Pakistan to a first Test victory over Australia in 15 years as Pakistan upset the odds to win by three wickets.

Mushtaq, who played alongside fast bowling star Waqar in the Pakistan team of the 1990s, said: "Salman is lucky. He has Waqar Younis as coach."

"It is very important for a young captain to have a very good, mature coach."

"Personally, I think this is a good combination."

Mushtaq, who starred in the Sussex side that won three County Championship titles in 2003, 2006 and 2007, added: "Maybe it will take some time."

"A young captain has to make his mistakes sometimes, and that's why the coach will play a huge role."

"But overall, as long as they both have a freedom, I think it can work."

Pakistan have been unable to play matches

at home since an armed attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in Lahore in March last year and Mushtaq believes this is a key factor in the side's erratic form.

"Naturally, they will struggle -- for consistency -- because they do not have that home advantage," he said.

"Just imagine how much it must hurt -- that no team wants to come to my country. That really hurts."

"You are always away from your family, hardly spending any time in Pakistan."

"That is hard. It reminds you, and you think, 'What is going on?'"

But in the absence of any international cricket at home, former Pakistan off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq believes playing in England is the next best option for the team.

Saqlain, credited with pioneering the 'doosra' (a ball that turns the opposite way to a conventional off-break) during a 49-Test career that yielded 208 wickets, helped Surrey win a trio of County Championship titles around the turn of the century and knows England well.

"It shouldn't be a long-term solution -- we need to play at home," Saqlain said. "If we're not playing in Pakistan it will be a big loss and our grassroots level will suffer."

"But if they're playing on a neutral venue, England is an excellent place. Pakistan players love playing in England."

"There is a big Pakistani community and they really lift us. Also, if the weather is good, pitches are good to bat on, you can reverse the ball and there is a bit of spin."

"If the weather is good the conditions suit us. There are a lot of Pakistan players who play overseas in England for that reason."

# 'Blind' Smyth makes history

REUTERS, Barcelona

Legally blind Irish sprinter Jason Smyth is used to being top dog at the Paralympics but now feels more than ready to mix with elite athletes on the world's biggest stages.

The partially-sighted 23-year-old has made history as the first Paralympian to compete at a European Championships, and produced a storming run on Tuesday at a breezy Olympic Stadium in Barcelona to qualify for Wednesday's semifinals of the 100 metres.

Smyth ran 10.43 seconds, compared with a personal best of 10.32, in the same heat as Frenchman Christophe Lemaitre, the fastest European this year after setting a national record of 9.98 at the French championships this month.

"When you come here and compete against guys who've run 9.9 you're worried about getting destroyed," Smyth said in the stadium that hosted the 1992 Olympics.

"In the Paralympics you're number one and expected to win but here the competition is a lot harder and you get away with very little," he added.

"But it does give you confidence competing against athletes of this quality and competing well. I definitely believe I belong here with these guys."

# Shahzad out for England

### Cricket

AFP, Nottingham

Ajmal Shahzad was ruled out on Wednesday of the England squad for the first Test against Pakistan, starting at Trent Bridge here on Thursday, with an ankle injury.

Shahzad's place in a 12-man squad has been taken by fellow Yorkshire seam bowler Tim Bresnan.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief medical officer Nick Peirce said in a statement: "After twisting his left ankle with Yorkshire over a week ago Ajmal went on to successfully play in a 40-over match for his county last Monday."

"Unfortunately Ajmal felt some discomfort following England practice at the NCCP (National Cricket Performance Centre) on Tuesday and as a precautionary measure it is felt he is best to undergo rehabilitation on the ankle for the remainder of this week."

"We expect Ajmal to make a full recovery, he hasn't been ruled unavailable for the second Test starting next week [at Edgbaston]. He will continue to be assessed this week before a decision on his fitness is made."

Shahzad, 25, has so far played just one Test, against Bangladesh in Manchester last month, where he took four wickets in the match for 63 runs.

It appeared he was in line to miss out on selection for the team for the first of a four-Test series against Pakistan, given England's preference for playing only four specialist bowlers.

However, some impressive displays during England's one-day series win against Bangladesh had seen Shahzad put himself in competition for a Test place with the likes of James Anderson.

England national selector Geoff Miller, speaking to Sky Sports, said of Shahzad: "His career's just starting. There's a lot for him to work at. It's disappointing for him, obviously, but he'll fight back."

"We'll monitor and work on his problem, his ankle. He'll come in and the medical staff will work on him," the former England off-spinner added.



Maria Sharapova of Russia serves to Zheng Jie of China in the Bank of the West Classic at Stanford University on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Contador parts with Astana

REUTERS, Paris

Alberto Contador will not renew his contract with the Astana team.

"Although the position of both parties was not so far from each other, the team wanted to know urgently whether or not [he would renew his contract]," said a statement from Tour de France champion Contador's press officer.

"Alberto Contador has rejected the ultimatum of Astana," the statement read, adding the Kazakh-funded team had expected a decision by Tuesday at the latest.

Contador, 27, joined Astana in 2008 after the Discovery Channel team was disbanded following the Pinto-born rider's Tour triumph in 2007.

With Astana, the three-times Tour champion won the Tour de France twice (2009 and 2010), the Giro and Vuelta (both 2008).

# BCB to discuss

FROM PAGE 17

Bhuiyan, member secretary of Mohammedan's ad-hoc committee.

"After the early moves by Sheikh Jamal and Muktijodha, there are virtually no big names left in the market which is why we are looking forward to forming a youthful side that would offer an edge in terms of spirit. Within a couple of days, our squad will get a definite shape," said Nakib.

It was learnt that Mohammedan have been in touch with Nehal, Hasan Al Mamun, Abullah Parvez, Faisal Mahmud and a bunch of players from U-20 national

squad and the senior division league. When asked why Mohammedan failed to retain the services of last season's players, Lokman said, "It is true that Mohammedan are going through financial crisis as well as organisational trouble, but none of the leaving players discussed with us before leaving. It is sad but true that players only play for money and have no feelings for the club."

"We will rope in quality foreign players and request the Bangladesh Football Federation to increase the quota of foreign players to six for a match," he added. Last season, Mohammedan's foreign recruits along with a couple of local players skipped training protesting unpaid wages and subsequently drew 2-2 with lowly Farashganj in a crucial league match that virtually ended their title aspirations.

Mohammedan's arch-rivals Abahani's manager Satyajit Das Rupu said they have almost recovered from losing key players retaining services of Uzzal, Robin, Nazrul, Pranotosh, Abul, Zia, Siraji, Mintu, Shohag. He also added that they are in constant touch with Alfaz Ahmed, Arup, Shuvro, Arafat Ronny, Choumin Rakhain, Himel, Kamal and Jitu.

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# Sharapova's revenge

### Tennis

AP, Stanford

Maria Sharapova would have preferred to forget about the last time she played China's Zheng Jie. At least she can move forward after settling a score.

Sharapova made a triumphant return to hardcourts, beating Zheng, 6-4, 7-5, in the first round of the Bank of the West Classic on Tuesday night.

Sharapova suffered a loss to Zheng the last time she played on hardcourts, at Indian Wells in March.

"That was a scratchy match," said the fifth-seeded Russian. "I wasn't feeling good and I didn't want to remember it."

The 15th-ranked Sharapova missed six weeks right after that loss because of an elbow injury and shoulder problems.

"After you don't play for a while you have to be ready from the beginning," said Sharapova, who won for the 15th time in her last 18 matches. "I wanted to adapt as quickly as I could. She's a competitor and a good player and I had to be ready."

Sharapova meets Olga Govortsova of Belarus in Thursday's second round.

# Mohammedan eye

FROM PAGE 17

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# CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 24 mins and a solution key at the bottom.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers for solving words.

CRYPTOQUIP  
Z G Z S Q W I H Z W Y G D W L Z L  
Q E Y K K W I J W I B D B M Y B  
W I R E Y B Y V E Z V D Y B, T Z D T E Z M Y G Z  
H Y E E Z L K Z Y S Y R B L D L J Z S.  
Saturday's Cryptoquip: IN OUR CLOTHING COMPANY'S GRAB BAG, I HAD HOPED TO CHOOSE LONG PANTS, BUT IT CAME UP SHORTS.  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals P