

Gayle, WICB clash

PTI, Kingston

Rebel West Indies batsman Chris Gayle is so frustrated and disillusioned with his Cricket Board officials that he might consider walking away from the national team, a media report has claimed.

According to the 'Trinidad Guardian', the friction between the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and Gayle has only increased after a stormy meeting, which was ironically called to settle the differences after the batsman's controversial radio interview.

In that outburst, Gayle had lambasted the WICB for leaving him in a lurch during his recent injury crisis.

The WICB wants Gayle to retract from the statement but he has refused, heightening the tensions.

He was left out of the ODI squad for the just-concluded series against India, and could also be dropped from the side for the Tests starting Monday.

"Chris wants to play cricket for the West Indies. He wants to play really badly and this is why he turned up for the meeting. However, what was said and how it was said at the meeting has left him rather frustrated and he may now look at taking his game away from the West Indies," the newspaper quoted a source as saying.

"This is a man who has served West Indies cricket well in the past and he was also captain of the regional team. However, he was treated very badly by one individual at the meeting and this has left him in a state," the source added.

Gayle was accompanied by executive president of the West Indies Players' Association Dinanath Ramnarine and WIPA vice president Wavell Hinds in the a near four-hour long meeting with the WICB on Saturday. "Chris was penalised (by being dropped from the West Indies team) before he was given a hearing. This was totally unfair and was aired at the meeting."

"Also one official who represented the WICB was very provocative towards Chris and was not even allowing him to answer questions posed to him. This was very unfortunate," the source revealed.

Sachin doubts

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refusing to accept it for their tour of England starting next month.

Tendulkar's apprehensions over the accuracy of the technology has been widely perceived as one of the reasons for the Indian board's opposition.

Hot Spot is an infra-red imaging system used to determine whether the ball has struck the batsman's bat or pad, while the audio Snickometer is used as a guide to whether the ball touched the bat on its way to the wicketkeeper.

But the latter has not caught on with cricket authorities due to the time it takes to produce an accurate finding.

Siddikur

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seven-under-par (135) after the two rounds.

Local hero Chinnarat Phadungsil, the 2009 Queen's Cup champion, lies one shot off the leaders while Siddikur, Chawalit Plaphol and Somkiat Srisanga of Thailand, and Finnish rookie Kalle Samooja are a further shot back in the US 300,000 dollar tournament.

Overnight leader Prayad Marksang of Thailand slipped three off the pace after struggling to a 73 where he is tied with India's Anirban Lahiri (72) and Gavin Flint of Australia (71) on 138.



Six-wicket hero Chris Tremlett removes Sri Lanka batsman Thilan Samaraweera during the second day's play of the third and final Test at the Rose Bowl in Southampton yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Tremlett 6 destroys SL



AFP, Southampton

Chris Tremlett marked his return to the Rose Bowl with a Test-best haul to leave Sri Lanka on 177 for nine when rain forced an early tea on the second day of the third and final Test.

Fast bowler Tremlett took six for 42, surpassing his five for 87 against Australia in Perth in December.

The 29-year-old giant quick ripped through Sri Lanka's middle and lower order with four wickets for 16 runs in 32 balls here on Friday.

Nevertheless Sri Lanka's total represented something of a revival from the depths of 39 for four.

Dilhara Fernando was 33 not out and Chanaka Welgedara seven not out when the players came off the field.

Tremlett, who made his name at the Rose Bowl with southern county Hampshire before moving to Surrey last season, had helped bowl England to an innings and 14-run first Test win in Cardiff before the drawn second Test at Lord's.

In this match, he'd already exploited the assistance offered by a green-tinted pitch to take two for 17 in 11 overs on Thursday before Thilan Samaraweera and Prasanna Jayawardene kept England at bay.

But, after rain meant no play before lunch on Friday, Samaraweera could only add seven to his overnight 24 before he was dismissed in Tremlett's first over of the day.

The 6ft 7in quick struck Samaraweera a painful blow on the glove with his second ball Friday and, four deliveries later, induced a loose drive straight to Kevin Pietersen in the gully to end a stand worth exactly fifty.

Tremlett then had recalled all-rounder Thisara Perera out edging an intended pull through to wicketkeeper Matt Prior.

Sri Lanka were now 91 for six, with Tremlett having taken two wickets for two runs in seven balls.

The one consolation for the tourists was they'd at least managed more runs than their record low Test score in Britain of 82 all out in Cardiff.

Tremlett though completed his five-

wicket haul when Rangana Herath top-edged a pull to James Anderson at fine leg to leave Sri Lanka floundering at 117 for seven.

But, after Tremlett's spell of three for 18 in six overs, Stuart Broad was unable to follow-up, the seam-bowling all-rounder too often harmlessly short.

Prasanna Jayawardene, who made a century in the first Test, repelled England's attack with several stylish shots on his way to 43.

But England captain Andrew Strauss saw his move in bringing on Graeme Swann vindicated by just the off-spinner's second ball, which Prasanna Jayawardene slog-swept straight to Eoin Morgan at deep midwicket.

Prasanna Jayawardene, in for nearly three hours, helped Fernando add 41 for the eighth wicket -- runs that could yet prove valuable -- before Tremlett's first ball back saw Suranga Lakmal caught behind for a duck.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: First innings 177 for 9 at tea (Samaraweera 31, Jayawardene 43, Fernando 33 not out; Anderson 2-56, Tremlett 6-42)

Either Serena or Venus

AFP, London



The imposing figures of Serena and Venus Williams are looming over Wimbledon as the most famous sister act in sport attempts

to maintain a decade of dominance at the All England Club.

At least one Williams sister has appeared in 10 of the last 11 women's singles finals stretching back to 2000, when Venus downed Lindsay Davenport in straight sets to claim her maiden Grand Slam triumph.

Since then the sisters have turned Wimbledon into a personal fiefdom, winning the title on nine occasions -- Serena with four, Venus with five.

But the 2.9 million dollar question -- the record purse on offer to this year's champion -- is the extent to which lengthy injury lay-offs have diminished the power of the all-conquering American duo.

Until her appearance at this week's Eastbourne WTA event, Serena had not played since last year's Wimbledon final, where she swatted aside Russia's Vera Zvonareva in straight sets.

Since that imperious victory, the 29-year-old 13-time grand slam winner has struggled with a life-threatening health problem before suffering a serious foot injury when her foot was sliced open by broken glass.

Serena insists she arrives at Wimbledon merely grateful that she is in the draw, and claims to have put aside thoughts of defending her crown.

"I'm just taking everything one day at a time, and I'm not putting too much expectation on myself or on my game," she said.

The effects of her extended lay-off were plain to see at Eastbourne this week, where she struggled past Tsvetana Pironkova 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 before exiting against Zvonareva in the second round, 6-3, 6-7, 5-7.

Elder sister Venus is in a similar position, also returning from injury at Eastbourne this week after a prolonged absence.

The 31-year-old elder Williams sister has hardly played since the Australian Open in January, when she retired after one game of her third round match against Andrea Petkovic after suffering an abdominal injury.

Venus avenged that loss to Petkovic in the first round at Eastbourne before dismantling Ana Ivanovic 6-3, 6-2 to reach the last eight.

While the Williams sisters are far from their respective peaks, it remains to be seen which of the pretenders to their Wimbledon throne are best placed to exploit the potential vulnerability of the Americans.

Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki has the top seeding and the world number one ranking, but with only one grand slam final appearance in her, few are

joined Bravo at the crease.

The Indians failed to make further headway, when they got a bit of fortune, Sarwan forced to retire hurt with severe cramps after the 38th over.

The visitors however, could not seize the moment, as Bravo took charge, hitting Mishra for a pair of sixes in his penultimate over, galloping West Indies to their target.

The short, stocky leg-spinner got his revenge, when he had the left-hander stumped in the 46th over, leaving Pollard and Samuels to take West Indies over the finish line.

expecting the 20-year-old to break her duck on grass, her least favourite surface.

"My main goal this year is to be a Grand Slam champion," Wozniacki said. "I want to win one. It would be disastrous if I could not make it happen. I just want to enjoy every time I play on the court."

Much interest will centre around the campaign of China's Li Na, the newly crowned French Open champion who has reached the final of both grand slam tournaments so far this season.

Li's victory at Roland Garros was watched by an estimated 100 million people in her homeland, and she is determined to prove that her performance in Paris was no flash in the pan.

"If I don't do well in Wimbledon, maybe people forget me already. These are tough times, you know," Li said.

With world number two Kim Clijsters withdrawing through injury, a potential dark horse is fifth seed Maria Sharapova, the only woman to record a victory over one of the Williams sisters in a Wimbledon final.

The 24-year-old looked in good form in Paris before losing to Li in the semifinals, and is confident she can progress far at Wimbledon, where she recored a memorable triumph in 2004.

"I know I can improve in time for Wimbledon," Sharapova said. "The aim is to get better with every year. I've a lot to look forward to."

The two sides now meet in the first of three Tests, starting on Monday at the same venue.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 251 (Kohli 94, Tiwary 22, Sharma 57, Pathan 30; Roach 2-52, Russell 4-35, Pollard 2-39)

WEST INDIES: 255 for 3 (Barath 17, Sarwan 75, Bravo 86, Samuels 28 not out, Pollard 24 not out; Mishra 2-46)

Result: West Indies won by seven wickets and India won five-match series 3-2.

Man-of-the-match: Andre Russell.

Man-of-the-series: Rohit Sharma.

Isner & Mahut in Wimbledon repeat

AFP, London

American John Isner and France's Nicolas Mahut were improbably drawn to face each other in Wimbledon's first round on Friday, in a repeat of their marathon 183-game epic at last year's championships.

Isner and Mahut slogged their way into tennis history last year when their first round duel became the longest match in tennis history, a gruelling 11-hour and five-minute game over three days.

When it was over, Isner had clinched a 6-4 3-6 6-7 (7/9) 7-6 (7/3) 70-68 first-round victory.

Twelve months later and the two journeymen are set to do it all over again when Wimbledon gets under way next week.

Isner is adamant that the records set in last year's match will never be broken.

"It won't happen again," he said. "Not even come close."

Meanwhile, since last year's duel Isner and Mahut have become firm friends.

"Honestly, before Wimbledon, we'd never said one word to each other," Isner said of Mahut.

"Now we text each other quite often and I've got to know that he's a really class act and a really good guy."

Haider fined

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan on Friday fined runaway wicketkeeper Zulqarnain Haider 5,800 dollars and put him on a year's probation for abandoning the team in Dubai over alleged death threats.

The 25-year-old created a stir in Pakistan cricket by fleeing the team hotel and flying to London last November, saying he had received death threats from unknown people to fix a one-day match in the series against South Africa.

He applied for political asylum in Britain and announced his retirement from international cricket. But after getting safety assurances from the Pakistani government, Haider returned home in April and reneged on his retirement.

On Friday, he appeared before a three-member disciplinary committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

"Haider accepted and apologised for his mistake in leaving the team and after his apology the committee fined him 500,000 rupees (5,800 dollars) and he will remain under observation for one year," said head of the committee Sultan Rana.

On Thursday, the PCB fined former captain Shahid Afridi 4.5 million rupees (53,000 dollars) over a breach of contract by announcing his retirement from international cricket and levelling allegations against the PCB.

Like Afridi, Haider acknowledged that he had erred.

"I accept I made a mistake," Haider told reporters after the verdict. "But I did what I thought to be correct at that time. With the passage of time I realised my mistake and will not do the same thing again."

TESTS THROUGH TIME



SIR FRANK WORRELL

Planting the seeds

Two decades into their induction as a Test-playing team, the West Indies assembled a number of supremely talented cricketers in the immediate decade after World War II.

George Headley led the way with his stupendous ability and elegance that was unmatched in his era. The only cricketer to be born in Panama, Headley gave up a future in dentistry to concentrate on cricket.

He single-handedly led the West Indies batting for two decades, earning the nickname 'Black Bradman', although his supporters called the legendary Australian as the 'White Headley'. A 22-Test career ended in 1954 but in those handful of matches, he struck ten centuries and won admirers.

But most importantly, he was the catalyst, an icon for the next generation to follow. The celebrated three Ws -- Frank Worrell, Everton Weekes and Clyde Walcott -- had already made their debut in the first year after the War (1948) but in the same year as Headley's retirement, a plucky all-rounder called Garry Sobers made his debut. Rohan Kanhai, whose luminous career spanned three decades, came into the scene in 1957.

Worrell's ideology stood firm and his strength of character made sure West Indies cricket moved forward and drew notice. He became the first appointed black Test captain of the West Indies in 1960-61, but his best came a decade earlier when his 261 gave him side a huge 10-wicket against England in Nottingham.

Weekes was the real stroke-master among the trio, hammering up to 20 boundaries in a Test against India in 1953 when he made 207 in just over seven hours. He was also the most prolific among the West Indies batsmen and the third highest scorer during the decade.

Walcott was almost as good as the other two, striking at a fast rate, his 6½-hour 220 against England in 1954 testament.

This was the time when West Indies had a line-up that had superb batting talent as well as magicians with the ball. None more thrilling than Sonny Ramadhin, who honed his skills by spinning fruit in Trinidad, and Alf Valentine; the pair beginning their Test career together in the same 1950 Test against England. Ramadhin's ability to turn the ball both ways and Valentine's high left-arm spin made sure of West Indies's first Test series win in England.

Both spinners took 138 (Ramadhin) and 123 (Valentine) wickets respectively and were easily the best spinners of their time (though Jim Laker threatened their status somewhat with his magnum opus 19 wickets against Australia in Manchester including 10 wickets in the second innings, while Richie Benaud's leg-spin also drew him 165 wickets during the fifties).

Those who played against the West Indies had to deal with not just the three Ws but also two brilliant spinners and if that wasn't enough, came forth Sobers and Kanhai.

If they were all paintings, Sotheby's would have sold them for millions.

Sobers, the wily left-hander, began as a bowler but as soon demonstrated his batting prowess in a single innings his 365 against Pakistan. He added a dimension to the West Indies team that their even more successful teams in the 1970s and 1980s missed.

Kanhai was the Virender Sehwag of his time. He only saw the ball and never gave a hoot about the bowler. He was ruthless, daring in his strokeplay, but at the same time he was a crafty batsman who understood the finer points of technique better than most. His maiden Test century was the 256 against India in Kolkata.

The gentle off-spinner Lance Gibbs and the equally violent Wes Hall came into the scene in 1958, a way to make sure nothing was amiss as the West Indies, who had already won six Test series in the decade, would build towards their dominance.

-Mohammad Islam

Li looking for double

AFP, Beijing



China's Li Na rewrote the record books by winning the French Open, and the overnight Asian superstar can cement her place among the game's elite by sealing back-to-back Slams at Wimbledon.

The unassuming Li, 29, has been characteristically candid on her chances at the All England Club, where she is a two-time quarterfinalist and a leading title hope among yet another wide-open women's field.

"The French Open is over, right now I'm preparing for Wimbledon," she said, according to the Beijing Times.

"Wimbledon is a grass tournament, you can't say that I played badly in the last two Slams so of course I'm going to get good results at Wimbledon."

Li, a one-time badminton player who

rebelled against China's state-run sports system, became Asia's first Grand Slam winner when she beat defending champion Francesca Schiavone to lift the French Open trophy earlier this month.

The victory, watched by 116 million Chinese, catapulted Li among the country's sporting greats, generating frenzied media coverage and a massive boost for tennis in the world's most populous nation.

Li, the softly spoken but iron-willed Wuhan native, has now featured in both of this year's Grand Slam finals after losing January's Australian Open final to Kim Clijsters.

And with Clijsters out of Wimbledon, and the formidable Williams sisters only just back after long absences, Li has a golden chance to strike another blow for Asian tennis, and in the process spur on China's army of budding players.