

It's special for Dravid

AFP, London

Rahul Dravid has his own very personal reasons for wanting to play in the 2,000th Test match, between England and India, which starts at Lord's here on Thursday.

It was at the 'home of cricket' where the 38-year-old India batting star scored 95 on his Test debut back in 1996.

"This place always brings back some very special memories," Dravid told reporters at Lord's here on Tuesday.

"I always play in some strange way at home, I feel this is a place of cricket, I feel this is a place that understands cricket.

"I even come here when I am not playing," added Dravid, a member of the world cricket committee of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), which owns Lord's.

"That first innings, meant a lot to me. I had played five years of first-class cricket. I had some good fortune to be able to play that Test match, there were a few injuries and I was lucky to get an opportunity.

"I knew it might be my only chance and I'd have to go back to India and start again -- and a lot of batsmen score first-class runs in India.

"I never expected that I'd be here 15 years later talking about it."

Dravid, recalling his debut innings in what turned out to be a drawn match, added: "I knew when I was 50 not out I had a bit more breathing space. It gave me a lot of confidence."

Thursday's clash also marks the 100th Test between England and India and could see Sachin Tendulkar, a long-standing team-mate of Dravid's, become the first player to score 100 international hundreds -- the 'Little Master' already has 51 in Tests and 48 in one-day internationals, both records.

He will take part in a practice session this morning before heading for Beirut tonight to play the away match of World Cup pre-qualifiers on July 23.

Strauss for 4-man attack

Cricket AFP, London

Andrew Strauss delivers a spirited defence of his preference for a four-man attack in his latest book, asserting that research shows England win more matches with an extra batsman than they do with a fifth bowler.

Seven series wins and a creditable draw in South Africa since Strauss took over as captain have justified a strategy that will be tested to the full in the four-Test series against India starting at Lord's on Thursday.

Even without explosive opener Virender Sehwag, who will miss the first two Tests with a shoulder injury, India possess a batting lineup crammed with class, experience and sheer weight of runs.

India field three great batsmen in Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman with an excellent support cast including Gautam Gambhir and captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, their two heroes in the World Cup final triumph over Sri Lanka in April.

If England are to take the official world number one ranking from India, they need to win the series by at least a two-match margin. The responsibility for capturing the necessary 20 wickets in a match twice will fall to James Anderson, Chris Tremlett, Graeme Swann and, in all likelihood, Stuart Broad.

Anderson came of age last year,

deploying seam movement and reversing the old ball in addition to his whippy late swing. Swann, one behind Anderson in third place on the world rankings, is the world's best slow bowler, a naturally aggressive off-spinner who gives the ball a ferocious tweak but who can also play a containing role.

Tremlett's pace and bounce have made him an automatic choice since he forced his way back into the side in Australia and the choice for the remaining bowling spot at Lord's lies between Broad and Tim Bresnan.

Broad, the national Twenty20 captain, was left out of the England side for the final one-day game against Sri Lanka and a county match for Nottinghamshire against Somerset proved, in effect, a test trial.

Watched closely by national selector Geoff Miller, Broad took five for 95 in Somerset's first innings which was enough to retain a place in the Test squad and all indications are that he will be in the final XI.

"There were signs he was getting back to where he was," said Miller. "We know what he is capable of doing and when he puts on that England shirt we feel sure he will show exactly that and produce the goods and make it difficult for India."

Broad's pedigree is undoubted and he won the Ashes back for England at the Oval two years ago with a splendid spell including four for eight in 21 balls.

But his bowling average after 107 wickets from 37 Tests has crept over 36

and he took only eight wickets in three Tests against Sri Lanka.

Broad still looks likely to win selection ahead of the reliable Bresnan because of his height and ability to extract nasty bounce, as he showed when he ruffled the Indian batsmen during the 2009 Twenty20 World Cup.

He left the Australia tour early because of injury and his problem against Sri Lanka appeared to be finding a consistent attacking length.

Strauss, who scored an unbeaten century in the second innings against India playing as a guest for Somerset at the weekend, made a point of emphasising that Broad's role was not just to bounce his opponents.

"Occasionally the situation dictates that you want to go short on a particular batsman and he is our best bowler at doing that, but that is not his role in the side," said Strauss. "It never has been."

"His role is not fundamentally any different from Anderson or Tremlett -- which is to build up pressure."

The Somerset match was India's sole outing in English conditions before Lord's and the Indians are also slow starters with each of their three defeats in the past three years coming in the opening Test.

Hesson new Kenya coach

AFP, Nairobi

Kenya have appointed New Zealander Michael Hesson as the new national cricket coach, officials said on Tuesday.

The Dunedin-born Hesson, 36, is widely regarded as one of the best young coaches in the game, having been involved in coaching the New Zealand A side and the Otago Volts provincial team for six years.

His appointment follows an exhaustive recruitment process, started after Kenya's dismal performance at the last cricket World Cup, which led to the resignation of the former coach Eldine Baptiste and the sacking of four senior players.

Who is right?

FROM PAGE 16 last one and a half years without any break.

Praising Stuart Law's rich experience in international cricket as a player and coach, Shakib hoped that something better will come from the Australian for Bangladesh cricket during his 2-year stint with the Tigers.

TESTS THROUGH TIME



Headley Marshall Kallis

Pardon the oversight

It is a tough job condensing Test cricket's 134-year history into 40 odd 500-word instalments, so it was inevitable that there would be some notable omissions in our run-up to the 2000th Test. Today, we look at the three most notable of these oversights, cricketers who have shaped the game during their eras and left a lasting legacy.

George Headley: The first great West Indian, he played at a time when the innings could crumble or flourish depending on his performance. It was a measure of his ability and determination that during a ten-year period from 1929 to 1939, he did not have a single bad series, something only Bradman could boast of over the same period.

His mastery over his craft defied belief. Respected writers like cricket historian Gideon Haigh talk about how he used to place his shots towards the bowlers of the opposition in an effort to tire them, and how he often used to hit the first ball he faced from a spinner straight back at the bowler in a ploy to damage his fingers and confidence.

His average at the outbreak of World War 2 was 66.7, and all of his ten centuries had been scored by then, from only 19 matches. It was his three Tests after the war, when his powers were on the wane, that brought his average down to 60.83, behind only Bradman and Graeme Pollock among batsmen who scored more than 2000 runs.

Malcolm Marshall: Whenever there is talk of the great West Indian pace quartet of the 1980s, his name must stand above all. Yet, he was anything but the typical Windies fast bowler. He wasn't six feet tall, and did not rely on getting steeping bounce to get his wickets. Yet he was devastatingly quick, and had the facility to move the ball both ways off the seam and in the air.

He was one of the few fast bowlers to enjoy success on the dustbowls of the subcontinent, taking 33 wickets in 6 Tests against India in 1983-84.

His most famous performance, which told of his big heart as much as his talent, came in Headingley in 1984. He batted with a broken thumb to enable teammate Larry Gomes to reach a century and then destroyed England with 7 for 53 with his left hand in a cast.

He died tragically young, victim of cancer at only 41. Wisden summed him up best in its obituary: "he allied sheer pace to consistent excellence for longer than anyone else."

Jacques Kallis: Without a doubt the most underrated cricketer to have played the game, Kallis sits a shade behind Sir Garfield Sobers as the game's pre-eminent allrounder. His statistics are mind-boggling: 11,947 runs at 57.43, and 270 wickets at 32.01. Experts have often wondered why he hasn't been more feted. It may be the mechanical way he goes about his job; with Kallis it has always been about following a tried and tested method.

He is the consummate batting technician, with not much separating him from India's Rahul Dravid as the supreme technical virtuoso of his time. His seam and swing bowling is ever-reliable and at times lethal, though this aspect of his play was always less prominent because South Africa had a strong bowling attack throughout his career.

However he is received now, in the fullness of time his stats will mark him as one of the greatest in cricket's history.

-- Sakeb Subhan

4 Indians & 4 Aussies in ICC's all-time XI

Cricket AFP, London

In the week when England host India at Lord's in the 2,000th Test match, there was no room for any English players in an International Cricket Council (ICC) poll to decide cricket fans' greatest Test team of all time.

Names like WG Grace, Jack Hobbs, Len Hutton, Jim Laker, Fred Trueman and Ian Botham were all overlooked as a quarter of a million fans voted on the website of the ICC, the sport's ruling body, for the top Test side over the last 134 years.

In contrast India, who are currently number one in the Test rankings, had four representatives including one, Sachin Tendulkar, who will play in Thursday's landmark match.

Australia also had four representatives in the team including the peerless Don Bradman, whose Test batting average of 99.94 remains head and shoulders above anyone else ever to have played the game.

Bradman, whose last Test was in 1948, is the only player on the list to have played

before the Second World War. Indeed, he is the only one from before the 1970s.

"Selecting from such greats is no easy job, and not surprisingly, the selection mainly reflects modern players seen by present day supporters," said Haroon Lorgat, the ICC chief executive.

"There are many greats from the past who would have easily merited selection in this team, but it is nevertheless interesting to see the fans' view on their greatest XI of all time."

Two West Indians made the cut -- although there is no place for any players from their great sides of the 1970s or 80s such as Gary Sobers, Viv Richards or Malcolm Marshall -- as well as one Pakistani, Wasim Akram.

Of the 10 Test playing nations, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, New Zealand and South Africa are also without representation.

ICC TEST DREAM XI

Virender Sehwag (IND), Sunil Gavaskar (IND), Donald Bradman (AUS), Sachin Tendulkar (IND), Brian Lara (WIS), Kapil Dev (IND), Adam Gilchrist (AUS), Shane Warne (AUS), Wasim Akram (PAK), Curtly Ambrose (WIS), Glenn McGrath (AUS)

Just needs to shoot

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slam the door on his face. "In terms of one-day cricket everything has been good for me but in terms of Test cricket I suppose the graph reads a bit up and down," Yuvraj said before leaving for England.

"Cricket is my game though and I am going to give this Test series my level best. I will give my 100 per cent."

Dhoni was criticised for not pressing for a victory in the Dominica Test against West Indies where India needed 86 runs from the final 15 overs with seven wickets in hand. He decided instead to settle for a draw and a 1-0 victory in the three-match Test series against a West Indian side ranked six places lower.

There, were, however some other positives, including Ishant Sharma's return to form.

The lanky right-arm pace bowler struck his rhythm and claimed 22 wickets in three Tests to signal he has put a bad patch behind him and is ready to share the new ball attack with Zaheer Khan.

Dhoni would also hope to benefit from the battles within the battle.

For instance, Yuvraj has already announced that he was looking forward to renewing his rivalry with Kevin Pietersen who famously called the southpaw a "pie-chucker" and dubbed his brand of spin as "left-arm filth" in 2008.

Being the character he is, off-spinner Harbhajan Singh can also be trusted to give everything in his duel with English counterpart Graeme Swann.

Dhoni will also have access to the insider knowledge of coach Duncan Fletcher.

The eight years he spent coaching the England team gave Fletcher first hand knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the players who form the core of the current squad.

Dhoni's only worry seems to be the absence of opener Virender Sehwag, who is recovering from a shoulder surgery and is set to miss the first two Tests.

Advertisement for Kantanment Board, Chittagong Kantanment. Includes details about the board, its members, and contact information.

Emily, Mithun

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and Rafiqul Islam, an official of Harirampur upazila, also confirmed that the national striking duo took part in the semifinal clash.

Manikganj Municipality XI won the game 3-0 to reach the final.

However, both Emily and Mithun denied that they had played a match on hire yesterday.

"Am I crazy? Will I play a football match on hire ahead of our departure for Lebanon? It might be that someone made a mistake. I am at my house and preparing to go to BKSP," said Emily when contacted. The striker, who has spent much of this season on the bench at Sheikh Jamal, scored one of the three goals in Bangladesh's 3-0 win over Pakistan at home during their first round of the World Cup qualifiers.

Mithun's statements also echoed those of Emily.

"At the moment, I am with my family (wife), and spending time with her as I will leave the country tomorrow for Lebanon and what you have heard is not correct," he said, adding that he had left BKSP at about 12pm and reached the city at about 2pm and would report to the coach again on 9pm yesterday.

"It was not possible for me to play any football match on hire because I am very tired after playing in the domestic league," said Mithun, who had scored 16 goals in the league to finish second highest scorer in the league after teammate James Moga.

Both booters were summoned by the BFF national team management committee and might face disciplinary action.

"It is sad and unacceptable but we will definitely take action against them if this is true," said Badal Roy, chairman of the national team management committee.

Test C'ship final could

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"Whether [drawn games] are decided on a first-innings basis or on runs scored in the game we don't know but they will come up with a viable formula to determine a winner.

"The final may be a timeless Test, at this stage we don't know but we are looking into the mechanics."

The last 'timeless' Test took place between South Africa and England at Durban in 1939 which was eventually declared a draw after nine days play spread across 12 days in all.

A draw ensued when the England team had to leave or they would have missed the boat home. England's fourth innings total of 654 for five remains a record for a first-class match and the 'timeless' Test remains the longest yet played.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 25 mins.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with clues for words. Includes a solution time of 25 mins.