

Wright to go in August

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand coach John Wright will step down from the national side in August after rejecting an offer to extend his contract, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive David White said Tuesday.

In a move White described as "disappointing", he said Wright will leave the Black Caps outfit in disarray and guided them to the semi-finals of last year's World Cup, as well as a rare Test win over Australia in Hobart.

The statement gave no reason for Wright's departure, although he has reportedly had a tense relationship with Australian John Buchanan, who was appointed NZC's director of cricket in April last year.

"I appreciate the offer to extend my contract but after much consideration I feel it's the right time to move on and look at other opportunities," Wright said in the statement.

No immediate replacement was announced. "We are keen to fill this critical role as soon as possible but are conscious that we need to take the time to find the right candidate who can take us through to the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup," White said.

New Zealand will tour the West Indies in July and early August.

Delhi, Deccan easy winners

'Cricket first, then ...'

AFP, New Delhi

Batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar said Tuesday he was "honoured" to be nominated to India's parliament but stressed that cricket would remain his priority as long as he keeps playing.

Last week, Tendulkar was offered one of the 12 seats in the upper house of parliament that are reserved for those who have distinguished themselves in various fields such as the arts, sciences or social services.

"When you get nominated because of your contribution in your field, it's an honour. I was excited to be nominated," Tendulkar, 39, told a televised press event in Pune in western India.

"I don't think I will stop [playing] cricket and go straight into politics. I will keep playing cricket. Cricket is my life and will always be," he added.

Tendulkar has not formally accepted his nomination, but such honours are rarely handed out without the prior agreement of the nominee.

It is unclear exactly when Tendulkar might take up his seat.

The "Little Master's" nomination has raised eyebrows in India, with questions over how the cricketer, who has previously steered clear of politics, could balance his sporting commitments with his duties as an MP.

Some former players have also wondered if the batsman may lose his universal popularity in India as the proposal to nominate him came from the ruling Congress party.

Opposition parties were quick to criticise the move as an attempt by the beleaguered government to distract attention from its difficulties over a series of graft scandals and accusations of policy paralysis.

"What is Tendulkar going to do in the Rajya Sabha? He has no scope there," Bal



SACHIN TENDULKAR

Thackeray, head of the regional Shiv Sena party, told reporters in Mumbai.

Tendulkar, however, stressed that his nomination had nothing to do with politics.

"I have played cricket for 22 and a half years. And I understand that I was nominated because of this reason. I am not a politician," he said.

"There are many responsibilities on me. I would definitely like to contribute in the field of sports because that is my expertise," the player added.

Tendulkar has played more Tests (188) and one-day internationals (463) than any other player since his debut in 1989.

He is the highest run-getter in both forms of the game and in March became the first batsman to complete 100 international centuries -- 51 in Tests and 49 in one-dayers.

The batsman is currently playing for Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League, a franchise-based Twenty20 competition.

You have to wait longer

AFP, London

Overseas born players wishing to represent England now face an extended qualification period of seven years, an increase on the existing four-year term, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced Monday.

The new regulation is to apply to all male cricketers who begin residence in England after their 18th birthday. For those living in England before they are 18, the period of qualification will be four years.

According to an ECB statement, the new qualification regulations will be deemed to have been effective as of April 25, 2012.

England have come under fire, both from within their own cricket community and from abroad, particularly in Australia and South Africa, for fielding several players in recent years who were born overseas but qualified for their adopted nation under the four-year rule.

For example South Africa-born batsman Kevin Pietersen, whose mother is English, played five seasons for county side Nottinghamshire before making his England international debut in 2004.

Heading

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you look back at during a season an think, 'we could we have done more'.

"It is his worst nightmare."

As events unfolded on Monday, Ferguson probably thought he was in the midst of a bad dream and lost his temper with Mancini at one point as the pressure boiled over on the touchline in the second half.

Ferguson told ESPN he thought Mancini had been "badgering officials" during the match.

The United manager was also frustrated after his defensive 4-5-1 system made little headway against City and hardly created a chance in the game.

The only goal came when City skipper Vincent Kompany headed home from a corner just before halftime and completed a league double over United this season following a 6-1 win in October.

While goal difference may yet have a say, taking six points from their closest rivals could be the key factor in giving Manchester City their first top flight title in 44 years.

Exit Pietersen, enter Clarke

AFP, New Delhi

England batting star Kevin Pietersen flew home on Wednesday after a highly successful stint in the Indian Premier League as Australia captain Michael Clarke made his debut in the Twenty20 tournament.

Pietersen, who left mid-way through the league to prepare for England's home series against the West Indies, scored 305 runs at an average of 61.00 in his first season with the Delhi Daredevils.

He played eight matches for the top-of-the table side, featuring a brilliant innings of 103 not out off 64 balls against the Deccan Chargers on April 19.

Pietersen, who had in the past played for Royal Challengers Bangalore, will miss the last six league matches.

"Sad day leaving India today," the England star tweeted. "Will be back soon. Special thanks to Delhi Daredevils. And another thank you to the people of India."

Clarke, who had shunned the four previous editions of the cash-rich tournament, signed up with the Pune Warriors this year for an undisclosed amount to play after Australia's recent tour of the West Indies.

The Australian skipper shrugged off jetlag after the long journey from the Caribbean to strike 41 off 31 balls on Tuesday night, but could not prevent Pune from suffering a 13-run loss at the hands of bottom-placed Deccan Chargers in Cuttack.

Clarke has six more league games to help Pune, led by former India captain Sourav Ganguly, finish among the top four in the nine-team competition and qualify for the play-offs.

Pune, owned by the Sahara group, are currently lying seventh in the table with four wins and six defeats.

"Clarke is a class act and it's great to have him with us," said Ganguly, whose international career featured many fierce, competitive clashes with the Australians.

They think

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Chittagong, Sylhet Divisional Stadium and Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna has been discussed as possible venues for the tournament.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar, who presided over the meeting, asked the meeting whether it can be possible to consider Gopalganj and Rajshahi as venues too.

BCB helpless

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BCB had even formed a four-member committee headed by senior vice-president Mahbubul Anam to find solution but nothing has happened.

Meanwhile, the board approved the women's cricket team's tour to Ireland in July-August where they will play four one-day internationals and three T20 matches.

PPL snowballing?



CRICINFO, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has begun the process of setting up a Twenty20 league in the country by soliciting proposals for the creation of such a tournament from a number of companies, a board official has said. Eight companies, including Ten Sports, Nimbus and Geo TV, have already made their pitches to the PCB, while another three are expected to do so this week.

"The purpose of the sessions was to hear the ideas and concepts and even the name won't be the Pakistan Premier League (PPL)," Ahmed said the board would evaluate all the proposals once the presentation process ends next week. The board is believed to want to hold the tournament in October, but security concerns could force them to adjust their dates. No international cricket has been played in Pakistan since the terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2009 and the possibility of having international players participate would depend largely on

the level of security provided for the tournament. Ahmed said the board has informed the government of their plans at a preliminary level and that they have been assured of the government's support in this regard, but a detailed security plan will only be put together once the structure of the league has been determined. "Let things be chalked out and then we will take the government on board at a higher level for the detailed security plan for the event."

He also said that there are parties who have offered to bring in "foreign players as a part of their support to Pakistan."

The PCB is keen to launch a league of its own because there is plenty of interest from the business community in the country. "They understand how much money is involved in it and they are ready to invest and endure the cost of such a league," Ahmed said. "So realistically there is less of a chance that we have to look outside Pakistan to generate money for the event."

The concept of a T20 league in Pakistan was first raised by former PCB chairman Naseem Ashraf who wanted to launch a league to rival the IPL in 2009. However, the idea was dropped after then president Pervez Musharraf was removed from power. Pakistan players were part of the inaugural IPL in 2008 but have not played in the tournament since the terrorist attack on Mumbai later in the same year.

Dale Oen dead! Kitajima in shock



AFP, Tokyo

Two-time double Olympic gold medalist Kosuke Kitajima has said the death of world champion Alexander Dale Oen has left a "big hole" in his heart before their much anticipated duel at the London Games.

"My tears won't stop," the Japanese breaststroke swimmer wrote on Twitter in Japanese late on Tuesday after learning that his Norwegian rival was found dead at a training camp in the United States on Monday at the age of 26.

"In shock over the passing of a dear friend and great rival. RIP Alex," Kitajima, 29, based in the US city of Los Angeles, later lamented in English.

Dale Oen could have stopped Kitajima's bid for a third straight 100m-200m Olympic breaststroke double in London.

"He was a great swimmer. I want to race against him again. That [feeling] had been motivating me. My heart is left with a big hole," Kitajima wrote.

Norway's swimming federation announced that Dale Oen was found dead in a shower at a swimming pool in Flagstaff, Arizona, where the country's Olympic swim team was training.

At the Beijing Olympics,



ALEXANDER DALE OEN

Kitajima beat Dale Oen by 0.29 in the 100m. Dale Oen grabbed silver, becoming Norway's first swimmer to win an Olympic medal.

The Norwegian won the 100m in 58.71 seconds at last year's world championships with Kitajima fourth at 1:00.03.

But Kitajima stormed back at the national championships last month, winning both distances to book tickets to London.

He clocked 58.90 in the 100m, a new national record, to become the second swimmer to duck under 59 after

high-tech polyurethane swimsuits were banned in 2010.

Dale Oen trained in Tokyo under Kitajima's coach Norimasa Hirai in late 2009 to learn how his rival was developing himself.

The Norwegian trained in Tokyo again last December when he said he and Kitajima were "very much the same" as swimmers.

"We'd like to race and we'd like to do our best," he told reporters, adding his duel with Kitajima in London would "definitely [be] a big challenge".

Asif out today

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan paceman Mohammad Asif will be released from a British prison early on Thursday after completing half of his one-year sentence for spot-fixing, his lawyer said.

The 29-year-old was jailed by a court in London in November last year after he was found guilty of conspiring to cheat and conspiring to accept corrupt payments over deliberate no-balls bowled during the Lord's Test against England in August 2010.

"Asif's release is a matter of few hours and I look forward to meeting him and helping him in his legal fight to restore what was an otherwise brilliant reputation he once had," the player's lawyer Ravi Sukul told Pakistan's Geo television in London.

Asif's friend and coach Mohammad Haroon had previously said the fast bowler would be released on Saturday May 5.

Sukul said Asif could stay in England while he explored the possibility of launching an appeal against his conviction.

"I have a strong belief that if certain procedures had been applied in Asif's benefit at his trial, they could have persuaded the jury to come to a different conclusion," said Sukul.

Besides Asif, Salman Butt, Pakistan's Test captain in 2010, and Mohammad Aamer were also jailed on the same charges. Aamer was released in February after three months in jail. Butt is serving a term of 30 months.

Mazhar Majeed, the agent for three players who was accused of striking the deal, was jailed for 32 months.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) also banned the three players for a minimum of five years.

Much to do for Roy

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certain that when the time comes to announce the squad that I've done as much research as I can and spoken to as many players as I can."

However Hodgson would not be drawn on some of the thorny issues that he will need to address early in his reign, most pointedly whether John Terry and Rio Ferdinand can co-exist in the same squad. Terry is currently facing trial for racially abusing Ferdinand's younger brother Anton, charges he strongly denies.

"I think the important thing at the moment is to speak to as many players as possible and of course John and Rio are going to be two that I need to speak to," Hodgson told reporters.

"I can't answer your question at this moment in time before I've had a chance to sit down with them or reach them on the telephone."

Hodgson meanwhile insisted he was capable of dealing with the raised expectations that accompany any England manager.

"I understand it. We all know that the England manager's job is the pinnacle of success for every English manager and we know that it brings a lot of scrutiny and a lot of criticism and I've got to be prepared for that," he said.

Hodgson was given a foretaste of the sort of increased scrutiny he will have to get used to when he was asked a question about his decision to play professional football in South Africa during the apartheid era.

"I've got to admit quite young at the time I went there purely for professional reasons: I was desperate to play professional football on a full-time basis," Hodgson said.

"I really didn't give the political system that much thought. It certainly didn't play a part in my position."

"So I think it's really slightly unfair in today's world where we are discussing racism, to go back 40 years and try to criticise a decision I made for purely football reasons."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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5	Slight	37	Airport	2	hangout	26	Hearty	3	abbr.	3	patents	27	Cravat	4	place	28	Cole	4	authors
9	Bake sale	38	Blackbird	4	—	29	beast	12	amounts	5	USC	30	No longer	5	dancer	31	Golfer's	5	—
12	Timber	42	Tear	6	athlete	6	one's	13	wolf	7	wealthy	32	chic	7	Type of	33	concern	6	illuminators
13	Laugh-a-minute	44	Type of	8	one's	8	suffix?	14	minute	9	USC	33	chic	8	dancer	34	concern	9	illuminators
14	Bobby of hockey	48	Shade	9	USC	9	USC	15	lore	10	USC	35	chic	10	dancer	36	concern	10	illuminators
15	Quick cut	50	Corridor	11	USC	11	USC	16	indulgence	12	USC	37	chic	12	dancer	38	concern	12	illuminators
16	Unrestrained	51	Greek	13	USC	13	USC	17	indulgence	14	USC	39	chic	14	dancer	39	concern	14	illuminators
17	Mainlander's memento	52	Subs	15	USC	15	USC	18	indulgence	16	USC	40	chic	16	dancer	40	concern	16	illuminators
18	Vortex	53	Siamese	17	USC	17	USC	19	indulgence	18	USC	41	chic	18	dancer	41	concern	18	illuminators
19	Lustrous black	54	Calendar	19	USC	19	USC	20	indulgence	20	USC	42	chic	20	dancer	42	concern	20	illuminators
20	Requirement	55	Steven-son	21	USC	21	USC	21	indulgence	22	USC	43	chic	22	dancer	43	concern	22	illuminators
21	Sony rival	56	Wrestling style	23	USC	23	USC	23	indulgence	24	USC	44	chic	24	dancer	44	concern	24	illuminators
23	Chowed down			25	USC	25	USC	25	indulgence	26	USC	45	chic	26	dancer	45	concern	26	illuminators
25	Country			27	USC	27	USC	27	indulgence	28	USC	46	chic	28	dancer	46	concern	28	illuminators
28	Very large number			29	USC	29	USC	29	indulgence	30	USC	47	chic	30	dancer	47	concern	30	illuminators
32	Straight-en			31	USC	31	USC	31	indulgence	32	USC	48	chic	32	dancer	48	concern	32	illuminators
33	Boredom			33	USC	33	USC	33	indulgence	34	USC	49	chic	34	dancer	49	concern	34	illuminators
34	Giggly noise			35	USC	35	USC	35	indulgence	36	USC	50	chic	36	dancer	50	concern	36	illuminators

Solution time: 27 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SUPPOSING A GUY WERE TO ILLEGALLY TAMPER WITH A BROADWAY THEATER AWARD, MIGHT HE RIG A TONY?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals S