

## Mushtaq pays Alimuddin tribute

AFP, London

Pakistan great Mushtaq Mohammad paid tribute to a "thorough gentleman" in Alimuddin after the former Test opener died aged 81 in London on Thursday.

The youngest cricketer ever to make a first-class debut, Alimuddin was aged just 12 years and 73 days when he played for Rajasthan in the pre-partition Ranji Trophy.

He top-scored in his first innings, albeit with 13, and then was second top score in the second innings with 27.

Alimuddin made his Test debut at Lord's in 1954 during Pakistan's first tour of England. He went on to play 25 Tests for Pakistan, scoring 1,091 runs at an average of just over 25 with two hundreds, including a best of 109 against England at Karachi in 1961/62.

He also faced the first ball bowled in an international match in Pakistan.

"I was very close to him," Mohammad told AFP in a telephone call on Thursday. "When I was a kid he would take me to nets and watch matches with me. I owe him quite a lot.

"When I came to England (to play for Northamptonshire) he was still very close to me. I lived in Birmingham and he lived in Harrow, so whenever I came to London I would see him.

"He was a thorough gentleman as well as a great cricketer for Pakistan."

Alimuddin, after retiring as a player, moved to London and worked at Heathrow Airport for Pakistan International Airlines.

Two of his brothers, Azimuddin and Salimuddin, also played first-class cricket.

## Blake threatens Bolt dynasty

AFP, Paris

Yohan Blake is the new kid on the block, the pretender ready for a tenacious bid to usurp training partner Usain Bolt from his lofty pedestal as the world's greatest sprinter.

The Olympics in London are the perfect setting for an intra-Jamaican duel of epic proportions, with Bolt defending his 100 and 200m sprint titles from the 2008 Beijing Games.

Blake's run-off against Bolt in last year's World Championships in Daegu was a washout, the latter sensationally disqualified from the final after false starting, leaving Blake a clear run to the gold medal.

Winning the title at the age of 21 years 245 days made the now 22-year-old the youngest ever winner of the world 100m.

This year, Blake and Bolt avoided each other until they could no longer, lining up for a battle royale at the Jamaican Olympic trials.

And Blake pulled off what many observers had long been predicting would happen: he trumped the towering Bolt in both the 100 and 200m to send an almighty tremor through the world of athletics just weeks before the start of the London Games.

## Lee quits

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mind as well -- time away from home.

"I just want to maybe do some fishing and just chill out for a few months."

Lee retired from Tests in February 2010 as Australia's fourth-highest Test wicket-taker but played on in one-day and Twenty20 cricket up until Friday's announcement.

## BPL-FICA

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"The irrefutable fact is that hundreds of thousands of dollars are still owed to overseas players and hundreds of thousands more to local players. Any actions that are contributing to the downfall of the BPL are solely those actions of some of the franchise owners, BPL and BCB," he said.



PHOTO: INTERNET

South Africa batsman AB de Villiers, who is expected to play the wicketkeeper's role in the first Test against England at The Oval, takes a catch during a practice session in Canterbury on Thursday.

## De Villiers raring for glove work



AFP, London

AB de Villiers is all set to keep wicket for South Africa in next week's first Test against England following the freak injury that ended experienced gloveman Mark Boucher's international career.

The 35-year-old Boucher, whose tally of 555 dismissals from 147 Tests is a world record, saw his South Africa career cut short when hit in the eye by a bail during the Proteas' tour opener against Somerset earlier this week and has since returned home.

South Africa called up Thami Tsolekile as a replacement but de Villiers, a specialist batsman who has kept wicket at international level, is expected to take over behind the stumps for at least the first Test at The Oval a week on Thursday.

"We are still deciding on the tactics," the 28-year-old de Villiers, who kept in only the second of his now 74 Tests, told Sky Sports on Thursday.

"I am very excited as I have always been up for challenges," he added at Canterbury, south-east England, where the Proteas face Kent in a three-day match starting Friday.

"Whatever is best for the team and maybe it is that I take the gloves.

"I don't think it leaves us with a bad bal-

ance and it probably opens up an extra spot for another batsman or bowler.

"I have really been working on my keeping," de Villiers insisted. "I have been keeping in the IPL (Indian Premier League) and in the ODIs and T20s for the Proteas. I feel as though I am improving with the gloves."

South Africa can displace England as the world's number one Test side during the course of this three-match series but they will go into the Oval clash on their back of a maximum of five days' cricket on tour.

"Maybe we will be a bit undercooked and we would have liked to have played a couple of Test matches against whoever coming into the series but you have got to take what you get," said de Villiers.

"I think both batting line-ups will be under pressure in the series, (they are) two of the best bowling attacks in the world I believe.

"We have lots of respect for the English team for what they have achieved over the last few years.

"Andrew Strauss (England captain) and Andy Flower (coach) have done an amazing job with the team, we know it's going to be a hard-fought series.

"We are looking forward to the challenge, we know the number one spot is up for grabs and to achieve something like that would be a great thing so we will go out all guns blazing and hopefully we will come out on top."

## Pakistan greets rue missed chances



AFP, Karachi

Former players Friday blamed Pakistan's failure to make the most of their chances for their 1-0 defeat to Sri Lanka, which ended the side's two-year unbeaten run in Test series.

The third and final Test ended in a draw on Thursday, handing Sri Lanka their first series win in three years after their 209-run victory in the first game in Galle.

It is Pakistan's first Test series defeat since the notorious England tour in 2010, which they lost 3-1 and was marred by the spot-fixing scandal at Lord's.

The result also ends Misbahul Haq's unbeaten run in seven series as captain, a spell that included a 3-0 whitewash of world number one Test team England in the United Arab Emirates earlier this year.

Former captain Aamer Sohail said missed opportunities cost Pakistan dearly.

"Pakistan had opportunities in all three Tests but they let them slip away and that cost them the series," Sohail told AFP.

"Pakistan didn't read the pitches correctly in all three Tests of this series and that's why they didn't select the right combination of 11 players."

Former chair of selectors Sohail said Misbah was short of ideas for how to use his bowlers in Sri Lankan conditions.

Former batsman Basit Ali blamed off-spinner Saeed Ajmal, who was the tourists' top wicket-taker in the series with 15, for being ineffective.

"In my opinion Ajmal did not do as much as he should have done," said Ali. "Ajmal didn't bowl as well as he could have in the final Test.

"That's why I believe (coach Dav) Whatmore needs a bowling coach for his assistance. Pakistan didn't give new ball to

Mohammad Sami in the final Test which was surprising for me because Sami is very fast and could have done well."

Ali praised Asad Shafiq, who scored his second Test ton in the last match, as an outstanding batsman for the future.

Former paceman Jalaluddin praised left-arm fast bowler Junaid Khan as the find of the series.

"Junaid really impressed in this series," he said of the paceman, who finished with 14 wickets in three Tests. "He showed a lot of progress and can go places in the future."

## Swann expected to be fit

AFP, London

England coach Andy Flower has said Graeme Swann "should be fit" for next week's first Test against South Africa after the off-spinner had a cortisone injection in his sore bowling elbow.

Swann, 33, has been a mainstay of world number one Test-ranked England's side in all three international formats but, together with seamer Tim Bresnan, was rested from the climax of the 4-0 one-day series win over Australia.

But Flower expects Swann to be back on duty when England put their number one status on the line against South Africa in the first of a three-Test series starting at The Oval a week on Thursday.

"Swann has a cortisone injection in his elbow -- and with the combination of rest and the injection, he should be fit for the Test," said Flower.

"They have had these ongoing elbow problems, both Swann and Bresnan.

"Our medical staff believe they will be fit and available for selection for the first Test."

## Powell vows to be fit

AFP, London

Former world record holder Asafa Powell has insisted he will be fit to run at the Olympic Games after withdrawing from the London Grand Prix with a groin strain.

The Jamaican was due to face Tyson Gay of the United States over 100 metres at Crystal Palace on Friday, but has now pulled out of the event for the second year in a row.

"I've been carrying some soreness in my groin since the Olympic trials and have been unable to train at 100 percent," Powell said.

"I need to ensure I'm ready for the Games and cannot take any risks," the 29-year-old added as vowed to be fit for the Olympics in the British capital by saying: "I will be ready in August."

However, the Olympic relay gold medallist made similar comments 12 months ago when he also missed the London Diamond League race with a groin injury which kept him out of the subsequent World Championships in South Korea.

He said then: "I am focusing on Daegu and as much as I'd like to run tonight, I just can't take the risk with the major championships three weeks away."

Powell is the fourth fastest man in the world this year behind compatriots Yohan Blake and Usain Bolt and US sprinter Justin Gatlin.

He has run under 10 seconds more than 80 times in his career, but never won an individual title at a major international championship, finishing fifth in the Olympic 100m final in both the last two Games, in Athens and Beijing.

## Bartoli beats Burdette

AFP, Stanford

Second-seeded Marion Bartoli won the last 11 games to surge past unranked US university player Mallory Burdette 7-5, 6-0 Thursday in the second round of the WTA hard-court tournament here.

France's Bartoli lost only seven points on her serve in the second set as she recovered from 4-1 down in the opening frame against the player who attends Stanford University, where the tournament is held.

Burdette had two chances to take the first set, but couldn't convert either one and Bartoli seized the chance to turn the tide.

Third seed Dominika Cibulkova beat Japanese qualifier Erika Sema 6-1, 6-3 while unseeded Urszula Radwanska, sister of Wimbledon runner-up Agnieszka Radwanska, survived a second-set wobble to defeat eighth-seeded New Zealander Marina Erakovic 6-3, 3-6, 6-4.

## Cowan's ton

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selectors announced their 17-man list last month, but he looks determined to prove them wrong and the 30-year-old Tasmania left-hander will have another chance to impress when he leads the A team against the England Lions next month.

Cowan batted for five-and-a-half hours on a tricky pitch, facing 268 balls including a six and 12 fours, and shared a fourth-wicket partnership of 104 with New Zealand's Hamish Marshall.

Resuming on his overnight score of 51 not out, Cowan added just 31 from 100 balls during an attritional morning session.

But Cowan moved swiftly to three figures after lunch, straight-driving seamer Reece Topley for four and then easing a full-length ball from David Masters through the covers in the next over to register his maiden championship hundred.

Masters finally ended Cowan's resistance when he trapped him on the front foot moments later.

## Bolt to battle it out

AFP, Paris



Usain Bolt arrived at the last Olympics in Beijing with athletics at a low ebb, but he and the sport were transformed after the Jamaican left with then-world records in both the 100 and 200m.

The ebullient Bolt captured the public's attention and went on to replicate his sprinting prowess at the 2009 World Championships, winning double gold, amazingly in new world records of 9.58 and 19.19 seconds respectively.

The world's fastest man became, and remains, athletics' hottest property, commanding huge appearance fees on the European circuit and earning enough that competing in London is prohibitively expensive thanks to the British taxman.

But in the run-in to the July 27-August 12 Olympic Games, a chink has appeared in Bolt's armour, a shadow of doubt that has not been seen in almost four years.

It comes in the shape of training partner Yohan Blake, who stunned the world (but not all athletics pundits) by beating Bolt not just once, but twice, in the Jamaican Olympic trials.

The glass ceiling was well and truly broken. Bolt the unbeatable has become beatable, albeit for sprinters who regularly clock sub-9.90sec times.

"Bolt might be a little off at the moment, but I'm sure when the time of delivery comes around, he'll be on top of his game," coach

Glen Mills said of the 25-year-old after seeing Blake beat him in the 200m.

It was Bolt's first defeat in his favourite event in more than four years. He clocked 19.83sec to Blake's world leading 19.80, and immediately vowed to fight back.

"It is not like I was blown away," Bolt said, pinpointing his "sad" bend as the race's weak point.

"I've been working more on the 100 metres," he said. "I can't blame it on that though. Just have to get my things together and get it done.

"It's all about work and just needing to get my things together and get it right. I got to get in the work and figure out what I did wrong.

"I have to work hard to get ready for the Olympics. I think I am a little bit weak but three more weeks should be good enough to get back into shape."

Born in Trelawny on August 21, 1986, Usain St Leo Bolt shot to prominence as a junior, winning 200m gold at the 2002 World Junior Championships at 15 years of age.

Standing 1.95m (6ft 5in) tall and weighing in at 92kg, the prodigy progressed smoothly into senior ranks.

But the son of grocery-owning parents will have his work cut out to hold off the challenge of Blake and defend his Olympic titles, something he says would be necessary to make him a "legend" of the sport.

"I am the Olympic champion and I have to show the world I am the best," Bolt said. "I will always make a comeback."

## Phelps to silence critics on pool

AFP, Knoxville



Michael Phelps, criticized by a fellow US Olympic swimmer about his work ethic earlier this week, said Thursday he plans to let his swimming do the talking for him about the subject.

Phelps, who won a record eight gold medals at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and six golds and two bronzes at the 2004 Athens Games, spoke as the US squad gathered ahead of traveling to London for the Olympics, which begin on July 27.

Tyler Clary, in comments to the Riverside Press-Enterprise newspaper in his California hometown, spoke about a poor work ethic from Phelps when they were at the University of Michigan together.

"I saw a real lack of preparation (from) him," Clary said. "Basically he was a swimmer that didn't want to be there. They can talk about all of these goals and plans and preparation they have. I saw it. I know. It's different. And I saw somebody that has basically been asking to get beat for the longest time."

Asked to respond, Phelps made it clear he was not concerned what anyone else had to

say about his motivation.

"For me right now the only thing I'm worried about is myself and preparing myself to go out and represent my country and step up and wear the stars and stripes and try to swim as fast as I can," Phelps said.

"There's nothing else that needs to be said about it."

Clary said that he works harder than Phelps.

"The fact that I know I work harder than he does makes me appreciate every little goal and every little gain that I make," Clary said. "The fact that he doesn't have to work as hard to get that done, it's a real shame.

"I think the things he could have done if he had worked as hard as I do would have been even more incredible than what he has pulled off."

Phelps will compete in seven events at the London Olympics. Clary will swim the 200 butterfly and 200 backstroke in his first Olympics.

Clary said he regretted the distraction made by his comments and said he has spoken to Phelps and there were no hard feelings between them.

"It was more of a relief to me to make sure that he knew that's not how I feel about him," Clary said.



PHOTO: AFP

Marion Bartoli of France plays a backhand return against Mallory Burdette of USA during the Bank of the West Classic at Stanford University in California on Thursday.

## Tigers undercooked

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has hampered the amount of cricket I've played but I've been working hard in practice in the nets. I played for Warwickshire seconds against the MCC Universities, and I bowled seven overs in the three-day game against Northants taking 1 for 11.

"The T20s come at the right time for me as they are ideal in that they are just four over spells as I continue to build up my fitness and strength. The foot is feeling good -- the initial healing period was given as 10-12 weeks, but we gave it a further two and I'm benefiting from that.

"I'm looking forward to the games in Belfast against Bangladesh as we've had some fantastic tussles against them in recent years. We played some great cricket in qualifying for Sri Lanka and the new ball partnership with Trent and myself proved pretty effective. This is an important series for Irish cricket and hopefully if selected I'll play an important part in it."

Andrew Poynter, the all-rounder who hit the winning runs in the World Twenty20 Qualifier final against Afghanistan has also been added to the squad, which contains the thirteen players named for the rain-wrecked

ODI against Australia last month.

Bangladesh will play two warm up games at Comber on Monday July 16. The first will be against an Ireland XI captained by Andrew White at 12.30pm, followed at 5pm by a second fixture against a Northern Cricket Union select XI.

SQUAD  
William Porterfield (captain), Alex Cusack, George Dockrell, Trent Johnston, Ed Joyce, John Mooney, Tim Murtagh, Kevin O'Brien, Niall O'Brien, Andrew Poynter, Boyd Rankin, Max Sorensen, Paul Stirling, Andrew White, Gary Wilson.