

Archery at home of cricket

AFP, London



Lord's, the historic 'home of cricket', was bathed in brilliant sunshine on Wednesday -- perfect conditions for a Test match.

But any members of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), which owns the north London ground, turning up hoping to hear the comforting sound of leather on willow reverberating around the venerable venue over the next week or so will be in for a shock.

For the keys of Lord's have been handed over to the London 2012 Olympic Games Organising Committee (LOCOG) to stage the archery competition, which gets underway on Friday.

And on Wednesday, 48 hours before the first arrow whistles across the velvet green carpet towards its target, competitors from India were putting in some practice at the Pavilion end.

Behind the targets, a 14 metre high purple backdrop has been erected, with giant Olympic rings emblazoned on the spaceship-style press box suspended over the Nursery End on the far side of the ground.

Flanking the archery arena are two metal grandstands with room for 6,500 spectators.

"We could have sold three times the number of tickets," said Michael Peart, British reserve team member and LOCOG volunteer, proudly.

While Lord's has been used in the past for sports other than cricket this is

the first time its owners the MCC have relinquished control of the ground since the Second World War, when Britain's Royal Air Force moved in.

"It was a huge thing for the MCC to allow us to use Lord's," Peart conceded. "But they couldn't have been more helpful, the only stipulation they made was that we couldn't touch the centre of the ground."

He added: "The atmosphere will be electric, and we've got lots of MCC members coming to watch. They want to witness this latest chapter in the history of Lord's."

Lord's has dusted off its crusty image and made serious strides at keeping pace with the modern world - women finally being admitted as MCC members in 1999.

But the lowering of the MCC flag and the raising of the IOC and LOCOG standards in its place during the height of the English cricket season ranks as one of MCC's more radical moves.

Olympic personnel and athletes have taken up residence in the magnificent Pavilion where MCC chief executive Derek Brewer's first floor office is now a doping centre.

A copper plaque at the graceful front door to the Grade II Listed building reads: "Whilst in the pavilion gentlemen shall wear ties and tailored coats and acceptable long trousers with appropriate shoes."

The bare-chested workman, wearing a bright yellow hard hat and torn shorts, sauntered past the notice, happily oblivious to the centuries of tradition he was flouting.

For India's 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medal winner Rahul Banerjee, competing at Lord's is a dream come true as he and his colleagues target a first ever Olympic archery medal.

Placing his bows gently down by his side after his practice session the 29-year-old Kolkata-born archer told AFP: "I'm cricket mad, everyone's crazy about cricket in India, so to be here is amazing."

"I've watched lots of Tests from Lord's, it's hard to believe I'm walking out on the ground where my hero Sachin Tendulkar has played."

"There is enormous interest in archery back home. It's historic to be here, and we want to make more history at the Games, if we can continue our good form we have a reasonably good chance of picking up a medal."

By contrast, former Australia cricket captain Steve Waugh knows Lord's well. But even Waugh, now Australia's Olympic athletes' liaison officer, was taken aback by its transformation for archery.

"It's different," Waugh said. "I never thought I would see it like this, and I'm sure the MCC members didn't either. It increases the profile of Lord's across the world."

Meanwhile Lord's groundsman Mick Hunt will no doubt be keeping a watchful eye on his beloved workplace during the Games, with normal service set to resume there four days after the closing ceremony when England face South Africa in the third Test.

SA rest Kallis for ODIs

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Jacques Kallis has been omitted from South Africa's one-day squad for the series against England so he can rest before the World Twenty20, Cricket South Africa said on Wednesday.

The 36-year-old Kallis, a veteran of 321 ODIs, was replaced in the 15-man squad by new cap Dean Elgar.

The Proteas play five matches against England in August and September, and the World Twenty20 begins in Sri Lanka on September 18.

Elgar, the 25-year-old batting all-rounder, has played in 85 List A matches and scored 2,593 runs at an average of 39.28, and has taken 29 wickets with his left-arm spin.

Leg-spinner Imran Tahir, who played the last of his five ODIs during the 2011 World Cup, has also been called up to the squad, and there was a recall for all-rounder Ryan McLaren.

"Dean has been in our plans for some time and might well have made his debut last year but for injury," Andrew Hudson, CSA's selection convener, said in a statement on the governing body's website (www.cricket.co.za).

The first match of the England-South Africa limited-overs series is at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff on August 24, with the series concluding at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on September 5.

South Africa will then play three T20 internationals against England. The squad for that series will be named in mid-August.

SQUAD

AB de Villiers (captain), Hashim Amla, JP Duminy, Francois du Plessis, Dean Elgar, Imran Tahir, Ryan McLaren, Albie Morkel, Morne Morkel, Justin Ontong, Wayne Parnell, Robin Peterson, Graeme Smith, Dale Steyn, Lonwabo Tsotsobe.

Scots eye

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in T20 cricket for Scotland," he said. "But it was an absolutely fantastic team performance. We haven't had the greatest month or so, we haven't had a lot of cricket and we've had a few disappointing results in the CB40 [England's domestic one-day competition]. And Bangladesh are a very dangerous side with some top-quality players."

"It has been one of our goals for a year or two and we had great belief going into today's game that we could do it."

Scotland travel to Cardiff to play Glamorgan in the CB40 on Sunday and Berrington was keen to build on the success against Bangladesh.

Proteas' upsurge



CRICINFO, London

South Africa's batsmen have surged up the ICC Test rankings to occupy four of the top six spots after their colossal performance in the first Test at The Oval this week.

Jacques Kallis is at No. 2, Hashim Amla (3), AB de Villiers (5) and Graeme Smith (6). Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara remained No. 1, while Shivnarine Chanderpaul dropped two spots to No. 4. Kallis also unseated Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan as the No. 1 all-rounder in Tests.

Kallis' unbeaten 182 in South Africa's 637 for 2 moved him up from No. 4 in the ranking for Test batsmen. Amla, whose 311 was a South African record, rose three places while Smith climbed four places from tenth. De Villiers, who did not get an opportunity to bat in the innings-and-12-run victory, dropped two spots from third.

Among the England batsmen, Alastair Cook moved from ninth to eighth because of the 115

hescored in the first innings at The Oval.

There were significant gains for South Africa's bowlers as well after they took 20 wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the three-Test series. Dale Steyn, who took seven wickets in the match, consolidated his place at No. 1 and is six points short of his career best rating -- 902, which he achieved against Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park in 2011.

Morne Morkel's five wickets lifted him from tenth to joint sixth with Australia's Ben Hilfenhaus, while Vernon Philander rose one spot to fourth place.

All of England's bowlers, who took only two wickets in 189 overs, dropped in the rankings. James Anderson went from No. 2 to No. 5, Stuart Broad from third to ninth and Tim Bresnan slid one place to No. 15. Graeme Swann's wicketless performance cost him three places from No. 8 and he dropped out of the top ten for the first time since August 2009.

South Africa need to win the series by any margin to take the No. 1 Test ranking from England.

The medal story

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London 2012 Games. It begins from the mining of the metal by Rio Tinto to the creation of the designs by David Watkins (Olympics) and Lin Cheung (Paralympics) and then finally its production by the Royal Mint. Examples of both the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic victory medals are the high point of the display.

The front of the medals display an image of Nike, not the sportswear brand, but the winged goddess of victory who lent her name to the brand. This image has been displayed since 2004, prior to which a different image of Nike was used to depict the front of the medal.

The design painted at the back of the medals has traditionally been the property of the organising committee since 1972. 2012 is no different and this Olympic design features five symbolic elements. The core emblem is an architectural expression, which is a metaphor for the modern city. The grid lines that crisscross the back suggest an energy that represents the athletes' efforts. More importantly, the River Thames is in the background as a symbol for London, while the square emphasises the focus of the athletes.

But despite all the razzmatazz and brouhaha surrounding it, the medals, although precious, are not as expensive as you might think.

A gold medal weighing about 410g contains only six grams of gold -- 1.34 per cent of its weight -- the remainder being silver compound -- 92.5 per cent -- and copper.

However, the recent gold and silver booms that have seen prices double since the 2008 Games in Beijing ensure that the medals are still the most expensive in Olympic history.

London Diary

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from the London Olympic squad. The ex-Beatle is set to play at the Opening Ceremony on Friday, and called for Pearce to perform a volte-face and choose the 37-year-old LA Galaxy midfielder, who had been selected in the original squad of 35 which was trimmed to 18.

Duck tales for Payne

Open water swimming is not the most glamorous of sports, but if anyone has done much to change that, it is South African born English swimmer Keri-Anne Payne. The British swimmer took a relaxed approach to the marathon event, which has a history of getting violent. And she related her first experience of swimming at the Serpentine, the venue for the event. "I had to fight with a couple of ducks, though, to get around a couple of the buoys, but apart from that it was really good. The only thing that was

Waqar

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involved in coaching in Australia in some capacity.

"I'll probably be looking to get into the system here in Australia and do some work here, maybe with the younger guys," he said. "The whole [Cricket Australia] talk has just finished now so I've probably got to start thinking about different things."

"I'm coaching one of the franchises for the Sri Lankan Premier League and then I've got the Twenty20 World Cup, I'm going to be doing commentary, studio work back in Dubai. I'm pretty full-on in the next few months."

Waqar was the highest-profile candidate to publicly declare his interest in replacing McDermott, who delivered impressive results before quitting after only one year in the job. James Pattinson, one of Australia's most promising young fast bowlers, said during the England tour that he would like a former Test player to be handed the position, but whether that happens remains to be seen.

quite amusing was swimming through all the reeds this morning and I got a bit tangled in them but I've overcome that now."

Ring in the Olympics

Artist Martin Creed's innovative project, All the Bells -- Work No. 1197 is set to make sure that the morning of July 27, 2012 will be like no other. At 8.12 am on the first day of the 2012 London Olympic Games all the bells in the country will be rung as quickly and as loudly as possible for three minutes. Be it church bells or alarm bells, ringones or telephones, for 3 minutes starting at the specified time the Olympics will be rung in to London. "It's by people and for people," says the artist whose creation is part of the London 2012 Festival celebrating the Olympic and Paralympic Games. "On the morning of the opening of the Games it's a massive signal that something is happening."



Serena Williams waves to the crowd as she walks between practice courts on Wednesday at the All England Lawn Tennis Club in London where she, along with her sister Venus, is to take part in the Olympics. PHOTO: REUTERS

Olympics is special for sisters

AFP, London



They may have won 21 Grand Slam singles titles between them, not counting their doubles successes together, but Venus and Serena Williams insisted Tuesday the Olympic Games were still special.

Many observers have argued that sports like tennis, where winning Olympic gold is not the ultimate achievement compared say to a Wimbledon or US Open title, ought not to be in the Games.

However, the Williams sisters -- the defending Olympic women's doubles champions from Beijing, having also won gold together at the 2000 Sydney Games -- insisted there was nothing to compare to Olympic competition.

"I think growing up as tennis players we always dream of winning Grand Slams and doing well at tournaments like Wimbledon but to have the opportunity to win a gold medal and be mentioned among the greatest athletes is an honour," said younger sister Serena.

"For me every tournament I've won, I enjoy my gold medal probably the most."

Venus, at 32, two years older than Serena, added: "When you're at tour-

naments and announce your name if it has 'Olympian' and 'gold medallist' behind you it's such a thrill and it's not something you ever get over."

"We do feel that spirit of representing our country, this is an event that brings the whole world together, so we're part of that great movement," insisted Venus, who also won singles gold in Sydney.

With the Olympic tennis tournament being staged at Wimbledon, it means the world's leading players return to the famed grasscourts in just a matter of weeks rather than waiting a year between visits as normally happens.

For Serena, who won her fifth Wimbledon singles title this year, as well as teaming with her sister for a fifth Wimbledon doubles crown, it is an experience she is relishing.

"I think it's exciting to be back so soon. Usually we have to wait 12 months to walk back on Centre Court so I'm going to be really excited to have that quick turnaround and get back on the grass where I love to play."

At Wimbledon, players must wear mainly white clothing, the traditional colour associated with tennis, while the Championships are also notable for their lack of sponsor signage around the courts.

However, no such restrictions will be

in place during the Olympics and Serena said: "It's definitely going to be different but we have to be open to change. This is the Olympics -- it's just played at Wimbledon."

The sisters could yet find themselves competing against one another at these Games if they are selected to take part in the mixed doubles event, which is returning to the Olympic programme for the first time since 1924.

"When we first heard about mixed was both of our dreams to play for all three," said Venus.

"But at the end of the day it's really up to what our team captains want and seeing who has the best chance to win."

The US, in common with most of the top tennis teams, are basing themselves in Wimbledon to avoid possible transport delays associated with crossing the capital from the Athletes Village in the Games hub of east London.

But Venus insisted she and her tennis team-mates would be soaking up as much of the Olympic experience as possible.

"Of course we'll be watching [other events] on TV, but we'll get to the Village and take part in all that too."

"For me that's a big part of being part of the Olympics. But, more than anything, we want to win matches so that will be our main focus."

Perfect ten for MSC

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Abahani grew more formidable as the match progressed and won the first penalty corner in the 16th minute which Kashim, in combination with Iqbal Nadir Prince and Moshir Rahman Firoy, converted to give the lead.

Mohammedan came into the match with an unexpected goal in the 27th minute and the goalied to a hold up.

Abahani claimed that deflected into their own net off defender Kashim Ali was struck by Nannu from outside the circle and demanded cancellation of the goal but the Indian umpire, after discussing with reserve umpires and hockey federation officials, struck to his decision and the play resumed after 20 minutes.

Three minutes before the break, Mohammedan took the lead with a brilliant goal from Malaysian forward Tajuddin played a neat one-two with Jimmy before hammering a fierce reverse hit past Abahani goalkeeper Aynul Islam.

After resumption, Abahani won their third penalty corner which gave way to a penalty

stroke when Mohammedan defender Chayan stopped it with legs in front of goal and Kashim converted the stroke to make it 2-2 in the 41st minute.

Abahani kept pressing and won their fourth penalty corner in the 57th minute and Kashim Ali made no mistake this time either to give Abahani some breathing space. But Mohammedan did not give up and hit back twice in the last ten minutes to snatch the match from their archivals.

The first of those two goals was a penalty corner converted by Chayan in the 62nd minute while the second was finished off by Jimmy in the 64th minute.

"We never lost the belief despite going down twice and we knew we would return if we won a penalty corner and we did it," said Chayan after the game while his coach Peter Gerhard refused to talk with the reporters.

"The boys could not take the pressure in the last moments of the game and suffered defeat which derails us from the title race," said Abahani coach Mahub Harun.

Ravi's place in doubt

ANI, London

England batsman Ravi Bopara's performance in the first Test against South Africa has put a question mark on his abilities of being a successful Test cricketer.

England will be slightly disappointed, particularly with Ravi Bopara, who got a duck on his return to the Test team.

Bopara is a very talented player, and one who is in form because he played well in the recent one-day series against Australia, but he has always had this question mark about the way he starts his innings in Tests.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HOURS AFTER SWALLOWING A CERTAIN MINERAL SUPPLEMENT, I REALIZED I HAD THAT ZINCING FEELING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals Y