



PHOTO: REUTERS

England captain Andrew Strauss catches a ball during practice at Lord's yesterday, ahead of the third and final Test -- his 100th as an England player and 50th as captain -- against South Africa which starts here today.

KP says sorry

AFP, London

England batsman Kevin Pietersen apologised on Wednesday for sending "provocative" text messages to South African players but team officials said it was too soon to say if he would be recalled to the side.

Last weekend, Pietersen was dramatically dropped from England's squad for this week's third and final Test at Lord's, despite scoring a superb 149 at Headingley, after failing to reveal the contents of those text messages.

South Africa-born Pietersen, in an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement, admitted: "I did send what you might call provocative texts to my close friends in the SA team. The texts were meant as banter between close friends. I need to rein myself in sometimes."

"I apologise to Strauss (England captain Andrew Strauss) and the team for the inappropriate remarks at the press conference and for the texts."

"I truly didn't mean to cause upset or tension particularly with important games at stake."

England managing director Hugh Morris said: "We are in receipt of Kevin's apology but further discussions need to take place to establish whether it is possible to regain the trust and mutual respect required to ensure all parties are able to focus on playing cricket and to maintain the unity of purpose that has served us so well in recent years."

Sharing

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bowling more effective. We all know what sort of a bowler he was. He was one of the best spinners ever produced in the game, so I want to take as much help as possible from him during his stint," said Riyad.

The Bangladesh vice-captain also said that he will try to learn the craft of the 'Doosra', the special delivery the Pakistani spinner invented during his playing time.

"Of course I would like to know about the Doosra. We would like to share his experience, especially how one can keep his cool during times of pressure. He was discussing about what kind of pressure they had faced during India-Pakistan matches," said Riyad.

SL loss

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loss of six wickets.

In the other matches, a dramatic collapse from Scotland meant they succumbed to a 10-run defeat to Afghanistan in Buderim and finished bottom of Group B with three losses in three games while Ireland gained some consolation following their early elimination from the tournament with a 14-run victory over Nepal in the group match at Endeavour Park in Townsville.

Strauss ends silence on Kevin issue

Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Andrew Strauss entered the debate over the controversial omission of Kevin Pietersen from this week's third Test on Tuesday, saying he regretted "dirty laundry" being aired in public.

Last weekend, Pietersen was dramatically dropped from England's squad, despite scoring a superb 149 in the second Test at Headingley, after failing to reveal the contents of text messages allegedly sent to South African players during that match.

Some of those texts are said to include derogatory comments about Strauss and England coach Andy Flower.

Pietersen's inability to either say whether the messages were true, or indeed apologise for them if they were, led England to omit him from the third Test which starts at Lord's on Thursday. It is a game England, 1-0 down in the three-match series, must win if they are to prevent South Africa replacing them as the world's number one Test side.

The match also marks Strauss's 100th Test and his 50th as captain, with the fixture taking place on his Middlesex home ground.

Tensions between Pietersen and the England hierarchy have been escalating all summer, with the South Africa-born batsman retiring from limited overs internationals after England refused his wish to opt out of 50-over matches while still playing Twenty20s. Then came his extraordinary press conference after the Headingley Test, where he speculated the match at Lord's might be his "last Test".

And last week, on the eve of the squad announcement for Lord's, he took to YouTube to insist he was now available to play for England in all formats.

But it appears the text issue was the final straw for the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) although Strauss, in an interview with Sky Sports on Tuesday, insisted he'd always had good relations with Pietersen, his predecessor as England captain.

"I've always got on with Kevin," he said.

"I've tried to be honest with him; he's been honest with me."

"That's why this has all been a bit of a surprise to me," Strauss said.

"I think the discontent that Kevin had with the board over his contract situation was one that the players didn't get involved in -- and I didn't really get involved in, if I'm honest."

"But over the last week I have had to get involved, because there have been issues a little bit more central to his relationship with the other players and our ability to perform out in the middle."

Strauss's management partnership with Flower has been behind much of England's success in recent years and the opening batsman added: "Firstly, I'm a big believer in not airing dirty laundry in public."

"It's one of our core values in our team that what goes on in the dressing room stays in the dressing room."

"Any time anyone has fallen foul of that they have been disciplined -- and rightly so."

"It's about mutual respect and trust, and that is a core issue that is central to resolving this."

Meanwhile England's Stuart Broad has insisted he'd no role in a parody Twitter account for Pietersen.

The account -- KP Genius -- was set up by a friend of Broad, Richard Bailey, and had been thought to have contributed to the strained relations Pietersen felt within the England dressing room amid suggestions some of his team-mates were involved.

But all-rounder Broad, in a statement issued by the ECB on Tuesday, insisted: "I would like to confirm that I had no involvement in this whatsoever."

"As has been widely reported Mr Bailey is a friend of mine, but we had no conversations regarding this issue at all and I am pleased that he has now decided to close the parody account down."

England off-spinner Graeme Swann said earlier Tuesday the team could cope without Pietersen.

"Just because you lose one player, it doesn't necessarily make you a weaker team. In fact, since Kevin retired from limited-overs cricket, we are unbeaten in all matches in the shorter formats."

Rauf denies relationship with starlet

INTERNET, Mumbai

Pakistani umpire Asad Rauf has denied that he was in a relationship with Mumbai-based model/actress Leena Kapoor, adding that he had never promised to marry her.

In an interview to the Indian Express, the ICC elite panel umpire however said that he remembered meeting the girl, when she had asked him to recommend her for the Indian reality show Big Boss.

"I don't remember where I met her," Rauf said. "During our travels around the world and at the Indian Premier League parties we meet a number of fans and people in the show business. They request you for pictures and we oblige," he said.

Leena Kapoor had complained to the Mumbai police that Rauf had promised to marry her, telling her that his religion allowed him to have more than one wife. The model claims that he later backtracked, and walked out.

"How can he put me in a television show? He is lying. After the shoot of my movie Lender got over in March, I went to a resort in Sri Lanka with friends, where I met him," she said. "He told me that he would marry me but now he doesn't even recognize me." Rauf however is prepare to face an inquiry, "Out of my 10,000 followers on Facebook, 99 per cent are from India," he said. "If there is any truth in what this girl is saying, and in case she has some concrete evidence, I am ready to come down to India to be questioned."

Jet-lagged Novak at Cincy Masters

Tennis

AFP, Cincinnati

ATP Cincinnati Masters second seed Novak Djokovic says he has to remind himself which continent he is on as his fast-paced schedule spins swiftly with the Olympics done and the US Open near.

"If you don't keep track of time and places where you are, it happens -- sometimes you wake up and say, 'OK, which time zone am I in right now?'" Djokovic said.

Djokovic made the quick-change from Wimbledon Olympic grass to Toronto hardcourts last week to win Canada's Master event.

"It's the way it is for everybody, mostly for top players," he said. "We are aware of the fact that Olympic Games are going to make our schedule more difficult and busier than previous years."

"That's what happens always in the tennis schedule when you have Olympic year coming up. We all tried to work our schedule around that. For now, I'm feeling good."

Djokovic will play his opening match on Wednesday against Italian Andreas Seppi, with top seed Roger Federer and Olympic gold medalist Andy Murray also opening then.

In Tuesday first-round matches, US 10th seed Mardy Fish ousted Spain's Feliciano Lopez 6-2, 6-3 while long time friend and two-time tournament champion Andy Roddick lost to Frenchman Jeremy Chardy 7-6 (7/4), 6-3.

German Tommy Haas continued his fighting return to top form by outlasting Argentine David Nalbandian 6-7 (0/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 in a match lasting almost 3.5 hours.

Haas won the Halle title in June on grass over Federer and played in finals at Hamburg and Washington. He reached the quarter-finals last week in Toronto and has lined up a Cincinnati date with Olympic bronze medalist Juan Martin del Potro, the eighth seed.

Japan's 14th seed Kei Nishikori opened with a victory over Marcel Granollers 6-1, 6-2.

In women's play, unseeded Olympic doubles champion Venus Williams found herself in a struggle with Russian Maria Kirilenko, the 12th seed, before pulling out a 6-3, 6-7 (5-7), 6-2 first-round win in nearly 2 1/2 hours.

The 32-year-old American was helped by 11 aces but did not do herself any favors as she failed to serve out a straight-sets win.

Russian Elena Makarova eliminated Nadia Petrova when her 15th-seeded compatriot trailed 7-6 (10/8), 3-1.

Germany's Angelique Kerber was first

Vettori back for World T20

Cricket

CRICINFO, Auckland

The fast bowler Adam Milne has been named in New Zealand's squad for the ICC World Twenty20, 18 months after he last played for his country. Daniel Vettori has also been included after being ruled out of the upcoming Test series in India due to a groin problem, and he will have the chance to test his injury early next month with the same squad to play two T20s in India on September 8 and 11.

There was no room for Andrew Ellis, Tom Latham, Daniel Flynn or Dean Brownlie, all of whom were part of New Zealand's squad for their most recent T20s, in the West Indies. As expected, James Franklin is part of the final 15, having missed the West Indies games because the team management wanted to allow him an extended run in the T20 format in county cricket instead of flying in to the Caribbean for just two games.

Others left out from the original 30-man preliminary squad include the fast bowlers Neil Wagner, Andy McKay and Trent Boult, and the legspinner Tarun Nethula. The national selection manager, Kim Littlejohn, said he was pleased to see the return of Milne, 20, who debuted for New Zealand as an 18-year-old in December 2010.

Putin hails Olympians

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday congratulated the country's Olympic athletes and their coaches and expressed his gratitude for their excellent work.

"On behalf of all Russian fans I thank you for your performance, for our country's success at the Olympics Games" Putin said at a special ceremony at the Kremlin in Moscow.

"This achievement has filled the hearts of the country's millions of supporters with pride for our country."

Putin, a judo black belt who watched some of the competition in London with British Prime Minister David Cameron, said he was satisfied the Russian team won more medals than at the previous Games.

Chess legend Gligoric no more

AFP, Belgrade

One of the world's greatest chess players from the 1950s and 60s, Svetozar Gligoric has died at the age of 89 in Belgrade following a stroke, the Serbian chess Federation announced Tuesday.

Gligoric who held the title of chess Grand Master also won the gold medal at the 1958 Chess Olympiad in Munich, an event not connected to the Olympics as well as several European titles and a record 12 titles as champion of former Yugoslavia.

Pietersen looms large

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replaced by another talented player," Bresnan said. "So why should we miss a certain individual because he's unavailable for selection?"

But even those closest to Bairstow might struggle to believe that -- at least for the time being.

There were reports late Tuesday that Pietersen and the England hierarchy were close to resolving their differences ahead of Saturday's squad announcement for the World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka next month but any 'peace deal' will come too late for the third Test.

Meanwhile South Africa all-rounder Jacques Kallis said England would be a weaker side without Pietersen.

However, Kallis added: "Cricket's not a one-man sport. There are 11 guys who can take a Test match away from us."

The match will see Strauss make his 100th Test appearance and lead his country in Tests for the 50th time.

Strauss who eight years ago marked his debut with a century against New Zealand at Lord's, his Middlesex home ground, would dearly love to match the achievement of Proteas skipper Graeme Smith, who marked his 100th Test with a century at the Oval to help put the tourists 1-0 up.

This match is also set to witness Smith, like Strauss a left-handed opener, break Australia great Allan Border's record of 93 Tests as a captain.

The 31-year-old Smith has been captain in all but eight of his Tests and likes Lord's almost as much as Strauss, having made a superb 259 at 'the home of cricket' in 2003.

Smith's two previous tours of England have featured the resignation of the then England captain (Nasser Hussain in 2003 and Michael Vaughan in 2008) and Strauss could go the same way if England lose at Lord's.

England are set to recall off-spinner Graeme Swann after opting for an all-seam attack at Headingley.

Lord's officials have said the outfield will resemble a "patchwork quilt" after the ground hosted the Olympic archery tournament, but have insisted it will be fit for play.

But while the archers may have left, there are plenty of 'arrows' still needing to be removed from the body of English cricket.

Sachin starts training

PTI, Bangalore

Senior Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar began preparations for the upcoming New Zealand Test series with a practice session at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) on Wednesday.

Tendulkar arrived in Bangalore from Mumbai on Monday morning and came to the NCA around 1.30 pm.

After a brief chat with the NCA physio, Tendulkar started practice by asking Zaheer Khan, who has been undergoing training here for last few days, to bowl at him.

Tendulkar chose to bat on fast-paced pitch. The first Test will begin in Hyderabad on August 23 while the second and final match is scheduled at Bangalore from August 31.

The two teams will also play two Twenty20 matches after the Test series. The first T20 is slated for September 8 in Visakhapatnam while the second will be played in Chennai on September 11.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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 - 15 Escalade, e.g.
 - 17 Troop group
 - 18 Veer
 - 19 Longing
 - 21 Help
 - 22 West
 - 26 Dangles
 - 29 Lunch-eonette order
 - 30 Compete
 - 31 "Time" founder
 - 32 Jane's "Glee" role
 - 33 Lo-cal
 - 34 Tramcar fill
 - 35 "Monty Python" opener
 - 36 Traffic cone
 - 37 Golf bag carrier
- DOWN**
- 1 Curved paths
 - 2 Melt
 - 3 Fashion
 - 4 liliu's place
 - 5 Wasn't well
 - 6 401(k) alternative
 - 7 Go green
 - 8 Tied tables
 - 9 Coffee shop vessel
 - 10 Main-lander's memento
 - 11 Parcel of land
 - 16 Mad
 - 20 Corrode
 - 23 Satan's forte
 - 24 One of the Jackson 5
 - 25 Spotted
 - 26 United nations
 - 27 Emanation
 - 28 On the rocks
 - 29 Clear the tables
 - 32 Sign painter's aid
 - 33 Hammer-lander's contribution
 - 35 Jr.'s junior
 - 36 Study
 - 38 Nerdy sort
 - 39 Utah city
 - 42 Mountain-top
 - 43 Whine
 - 44 Get a glimpse of
 - 45 Occupation
 - 46 "The — Daba Honey-moon"
 - 47 Neither mate
 - 49 Big

Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: FAMOUS BIG APPLE SKYSCRAPER CONSTRUCTED FROM GRAY METAMORPHIC ROCK: THE EMPIRE SLATE BUILDING.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals Y