

CRICKET

WADE CONFIDENT BACK WILL ENDURE INDIA TEST



MUMBAI: Australia's wicketkeeper Matthew Wade (L) does shadow practice as captain Steve Smith bats in the nets during a training session at The Brabourne Cricket Stadium. — AFP

MUMBAI: Australia wicketkeeper Matthew Wade is confident his back problem will not flare up during the team's four-test series in India, the 29-year-old said yesterday. Wade abandoned the recent one-day tour of New Zealand to return home to manage a bulging disc before joining his team mates at a pre-series training camp in Dubai.

"It's just something that I'll have to manage," Wade told reporters at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium. "The disc just bulged a little bit but it just hit one of the nerves, so it took a little while to come right. "I've done it before, touch wood it doesn't happen again but if it does I'm confident that I can turn it around pretty quick."

Australia will take on world number one India in the first of the four tests at Pune next Thursday and Wade is aware that his keeping techniques will be thoroughly tested in India's spin-friendly conditions. "It's trying to get all that out of your mind and stick to the basics," the Victoria captain said. "The ball that turns and bounces, you'll react if your technique's good. "It's about trying to hone my technique in the next week or two, then when you do get one that spits out of the rough it's just trusting your technique. "But I quite enjoy keeping over here, the ball beats the bat a lot more up to the stumps so that's probably the challenge. "In Australia the ball doesn't beat the bat consistently so it's hard to get a consistent rhythm up to the stumps," he said. — Reuters



LAHORE: The Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Shaharyar Khan talks to journalists outside the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium. —AFP

PCB TO INDICT
CRICKETERS AFTER
LEGAL FORMALITIES

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan said yesterday suspended cricketers Sharjeel Khan and Khalid Latif will be formally indicted for spot-fixing. Sharjeel and Latif had informal meetings with officials of the PCB's anti-corruption unit in Lahore over the last two days, during which the players asked for time to consult their families before giving their statements.

"We will formally record their statements on video and then indict them in a day or two," Shaharyar told reporters in Lahore yesterday. "We have to be very careful and make sure the legal process is complete. Legally our stance should be watertight because these players might go to the court." Last Friday, the PCB provisionally suspended both players, who represented Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League. On Monday Britain's National Crime Authority arrested two men, one of them believed to be former Pakistan opening batsman Nasir Jamshed, before releasing them on bail in connection with spot-fixing in the PSL.

The PCB suspended Jamshed from playing any form of cricket. The officials of the PSL and PCB claimed to have concrete evidence against both Sharjeel and Latif of involvement in spot-fixing during the PSL. Three more players - Islamabad United's Mohammad Irfan, Quetta Gladiators' Zulfiqar Babar and Karachi Kings' Shazaib Hassan were questioned by the PCB's anti-corruption unit, but none of them were suspended. — AP

KOHLI AND SMITH INSPIRE
NEW ENG CAPTAIN ROOT

LEEDS: Joe Root hopes becoming a Test captain will take his batting to the "next level", just as it's done for India's Virat Kohli and Australia's Steve Smith. Root was confirmed as England's new Test skipper, following Alastair Cook's resignation, despite the likes of former Test spinner Graeme Swann saying it could adversely affect his batting. The 26-year-old Yorkshireman already boasts an impressive batting average of nearly 53 in his 53 Tests to date.

Yet Kohli averages over 67 as captain of the India side now top of the world Test rankings compared to a shade above 41 when a player in the ranks. The corresponding figures for Smith are equally stark, at 71 and 53 respectively. "That excites me," said Root at his Headingley home ground on Wednesday. "It's a great motivator to make sure I do everything I can to get my batting in the best place possible and set the example for the rest of the guys in the team."

Root added: "You look at other guys who've taken similar roles like Virat and Steve Smith and they've gone on to bigger and better things and taken their game to the next level. I don't see why I can't look at it in the same light. "It's a great opportunity to take that added responsibility and really motivate me to get better. "Every kid dreams of being England captain one day... I'm just really looking forward to getting my teeth into it and putting my mark on things."

'Biggest honor'

Root insisted he had no hesitation in accepting the captaincy when it was offered to him by England and Wales Cricket Board director Andrew Strauss. "I think it's the biggest honor in the game, simple as that," he said. Meanwhile Strauss, Cook's predecessor as England captain, forecast an initial upsurge in the form of Root, a regular in all three international formats.



Joe Root

"When you get to the end of a captaincy career, you look at Alastair Cook and talk about him feeling a bit drained," said Strauss. "The opposite is also true. Early on in your captaincy career, it's incredibly energizing. "You walk a bit taller, you are passionate about taking the team forward, and you want to contribute to winning games of cricket. "We've seen with a lot of captains that it's had a really positive effect on their game generally. There's no reason why that wouldn't happen to Joe for the next 18 months. And it's 18 very important months for both him and the England team."

Root has plenty of time to ease himself into his new role as England's next Test is not until they face South Africa at Lord's in July, with their focus for the time being on limited overs cricket, including June's Champions Trophy on home soil. For a team that prides itself on its Test results, 2016 was a tough

year for England. They lost eight Tests in all, culminating in a 4-0 series loss in India-Cook's final campaign as captain.

After this year's home series against South Africa and the West Indies, England's packed schedule continues with the defense of the Ashes in Australia in November. But an undaunted Root said of his promotion to captain: "It's a good opportunity to give something back to the game that has given me so much. "I'm very lucky to have inherited an exciting team with a great blend of experience, raw talent and a core group of players who have played 20-30 games and are ready to take some more responsibility." He added: "I'd like to be a captain that wins, tough to play against, and I like to hope we'll play cricket that is enjoyable to watch. "It should be entertaining Test cricket and that's something I want to get across to the team and the people watching." — AFP