

NZ TO KEEP TRIALLING DAY-NIGHT FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Cricket appear to be pushing ahead with plans to trial day-night first class matches as they build towards hosting their inaugural pink ball home test against England in 2018.

NZC released their 2016/17 domestic fixture list yesterday and Wellington Regional Stadium, which has never hosted a first class match and has been used solely for day-night limited-overs interna-

tional cricket, is to host one of the Plunket Shield games scheduled to begin on March 6.

Auckland's Eden Park and Hamilton's Seddon Park, both of which have lights, will also host matches starting on March 6. All three games have not had their start times confirmed, while every other Plunket Shield match in the 2016/17 season has a traditional start time of 10:30

am (2130 GMT). Only one of the other venues scheduled to host first class cricket this season, Napier's McLean Park, has lights. All of the Plunket Shield matches there are scheduled as day games.

NZC has said they hoped to play their first day-night test match at home against England in 2018.

New Zealand played Australia in the inaugural day-night test in Adelaide last

year and while the ball swung appreciably and batsmen said they found it difficult to see after twilight, administrators felt the interest generated had been sufficient to continue to explore the concept. Next year's Plunket Shield matches should give NZC the opportunity to test the conditions likely to be faced by both sides in 2018, with the England tour pencilled in for mid-February to late March.

Eden Park has been designated the first test on that tour, with the second at Christchurch's Hagley Oval, which does not have lights. NZC had considered holding a round of first class day-night matches earlier this year with an eye to playing one of their tests against South Africa next March with the pink ball, but had to scrap the idea after McLean Park's lights were deemed not strong enough. — Reuters

NO REGRETS FOR LEGEND KEANE AS HE PREPARES FINAL BOW

DUBLIN: Retiring Ireland legend Robbie Keane says he would not have swapped a major club honour for his international career. The LA Galaxy striker will play for his country for the last time in tonight's friendly with Oman at Lansdowne Road. With 67 goals in 145 appearances, Keane is 15th on the all-time international goalscorers list, just one behind German legend Gerd Muller. The 36-year-old Keane could overtake the man who won three European Cups with Bayern Munich in the 1970s, but he'd never change anything about his international career, that covered 18 years and three major finals. "No way. No chance," said Keane.

"I'll miss everything about playing for Ireland, first and foremost, I'll miss pulling that green jersey on. For me, more than anything, that's been the highlight of my career. I've played for many clubs but the Ireland jersey always seemed to fit me the best. I've enjoyed every minute of it. I'll miss it all. All I can do now is watch from the side and wish the team well. It's going to be a little bit different for me, a bit surreal." Over 18 years have passed since Keane made his Ireland debut against the Czech Republic as a raw 17-year-old striker at Wolverhampton Wanderers. Since then he has played for nine clubs including Inter Milan, Leeds United, Tottenham, Liverpool, Celtic and Los Angeles Galaxy. Although Keane is 13th in the Premier League's all-time goalscoring charts, with 126 goals, he won just one major trophy in British football, the 2008 League Cup with Tottenham, but has since added three MLS Cups in the United States.

But the international scene was always what mattered most to the Dubliner, often to the annoyance of his club managers.

"I could never understand why people pulled out of games, I could never get my head around that and still to this day can't," he said, revealing he rejected requests by club managers to skip international duty. "One

thing about me, I've always turned up, I've always tried my best. Even with injuries, you get injections before games. And that's just the love for Ireland and that's the love for the country." Oman could become the 37th different country to be on the wrong side of a Keane strike, and he has history on his side with 42 of his 67 goals scored on home soil.

"I don't care about Muller's record or anyone, I'm chasing the next one because that's what I've done since I was seven. I don't know any different," Keane said.

"I want to sign off with a goal. There is no way I'm going into this game half hearted. Just because it's my last game, I'm not going to go into it thinking I'll enjoy the moment, as soon as that whistle goes, I'll want to win the game." He's received good luck messages since announcing his retirement from David Beckham, Steven Gerrard and Mick McCarthy, among others, but had special thanks to Ireland manager Martin O'Neill for asking him to play in Wednesday's game. "I spoke to him after the Euros and thanked him, Roy (Keane), everyone," said Keane.

"I said I would announce it (retiring) in a few weeks and then I got the call from Martin to see if I would play this game as an appreciation to you and I said of course, no problem. I was delighted and humbled to have the opportunity." Keane is expecting an emotional night in front of a packed house in Dublin, for the game that comes just five days before the country's World Cup 2018 qualification campaign opener in Serbia.

"It's certainly going to be difficult to keep a dry eye, there is no question about it," he admitted. "It's been my life since I was 17 years of age. Knowing on tomorrow that it's going to be the last time I've played for Ireland, waking up that morning is going to be very very strange for me. Even packing my bags for one last time was very weird, it's the weirdest, strangest feeling I've ever had." — AFP



PRETORIA: New Zealand's batsman Henry Nicholls, left, watches as South Africa's bowler Kagiso Rabada, fields off his shot during the fourth day of the second cricket test match between South Africa and New Zealand, at Centurion Park in Pretoria, South Africa, yesterday. — AP

STEYN SETS UP SOUTH AFRICAN SERIES WIN

CENTURION: Fast bowler Dale Steyn set up a series-clinching 204-run win for South Africa on the fourth day of the second and final Test against New Zealand at SuperSport Park yesterday. Steyn took three wickets with his first 11 balls of the innings and finished with five for 33 as New Zealand were bowled out for 195 despite a defiant innings of 76 by Henry Nicholls.

It looked as though it would be easy for the hosts when Steyn and Vernon Philander ripped through New Zealand's top four batsmen for seven runs inside the first four overs of the innings. But the left-handed Nicholls, playing in his sixth Test match, displayed courage and concentration in making his second Test half-century and highest score to delay South Africa's celebrations. He found a similarly determined partner in BJ Watling, who made 32 in a two-hour, 68-run fifth wicket partnership, while Mitchell Santner, Doug Bracewell and Tim Southee all provided varying degrees of resistance. Nicholls was last man out after batting for 255 minutes. He faced 140 balls and hit 12 fours.

Steyn bowled Tom Latham with the first ball of the final innings, then had Latham's fellow opener, Martin Guptill, caught at first slip, also for a first ball duck, off the final ball of the over.

The magnitude of New Zealand's task was shown in the second over when captain and first innings top-scorer Kane Williamson was struck a painful blow on the left hand by a ball from Vernon Philander which reared up off a good length. He required lengthy treatment before resuming his innings. The team physiotherapist went onto the field twice more to treat the player before Williamson was caught behind off Philander for five. In between, Ross Taylor was trapped leg before wicket by an unplayable ball from Steyn, which skidded through barely above ankle height off a pitch with increasingly unpredictable bounce.

Latham tried to leave the ball from Steyn that bowled him but it lifted sharply and bounced off his raised bat onto the stumps. Guptill, a heavy scorer in limited overs international cricket, again raised doubts about his technique in Test cricket when he edged a ball that seamed away from him. In three innings in the truncated series, Latham and Guptill scored a combined 23 runs and the highest total at the fall of the second wicket was 13, putting pressure on Williamson and the remaining batsmen. Watling

was dropped by Stiaan van Zyl at third slip off Philander when he had five and two runs later seemed lucky to get the benefit of the doubt from television umpire Richard Illingworth when the South Africans appeared convinced that he had gloved Philander to De Kock.

South Africa added 27 runs in 13 overs, for the loss of Philander's wicket, before declaring their second innings on 132 for seven. Temba Bavuma made 40 not out. Tim Southee bowled Philander and finished with three for 46. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

CENTURION, South Africa: Final scores on the fourth day of the second and final Test between South Africa and New Zealand at SuperSport Park yesterday:

South Africa, first innings, 481-8 dec		New Zealand, second innings	
New Zealand, first innings, 214		T. Latham b Steyn	0
South Africa, second innings		M. Guptill c Amla b Steyn	0
(overnight 105-6)		K. Williamson c De Kock b Philander	5
S. Cook lbw b Boult	4	R. Taylor lbw b Steyn	0
Q. de Kock c Williamson b Bracewell	50	H. Nicholls c Rabada b Steyn	76
H. Amla c Guptill b Southee	1	B. Watling lbw b Piedt	32
J. Duminy lbw b Southee	0	M. Santner b Steyn	16
F. du Plessis c Taylor b Boult	6	D. Bracewell lbw b Philander	30
T. Bavuma not out	40	T. Southee b Rabada	14
S. van Zyl c Watling b Wagner	5	N. Wagner lbw b Rabada	3
V. Philander b Southee	14	T. Boult not out	0
D. Piedt not out	0	Extras (b10, lb7, w2)	19
Extras (b4, lb1, nb1, w6)	12	Total (58.2 overs)	195
Total (7 wks dec, 47 overs)	132	Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Latham), 2-3 (Guptill), 3-5 (Taylor), 4-7 (Williamson), 5-75 (Watling), 6-118 (Santner), 7-164 (Bracewell), 8-187 (Southee), 9-195 (Wagner)	
Fall of wickets: 1-31 (Cook), 2-32 (Amla), 3-32 (Duminy), 4-47 (Du Plessis), 5-82 (De Kock), 6-98 (Van Zyl), 7-129 (Philander)		Bowling: Steyn 16.2-4-33-5, Philander 14-4-34-2 (1w), Rabada 13-2-54-2 (1w), Van Zyl 3-1-5-0, Piedt 12-3-52-1.	
Bowling: Southee 16-6-46-3 (1w), Boult 14-3-44-2, Bracewell 7-2-19-1, Wagner 10-1-18-1 (1nb, 1w)		Result: South Africa won by 204 runs.	

VAN BASTEN QUILTS DUTCH TEAM FOR FIFA JOB

AMSTERDAM: Netherlands assistant coach Marco van Basten is to give up the role by the end of the year as the leadership crisis surrounding the side took another twist yesterday, a week before the Dutch kick off their 2018 World Cup campaign.

Van Basten is the second of Danny Blind's assistants to announce their departure in the last two weeks after Dick Advocaat opted to take over as head coach of Turkish side Fenerbahce.

The Dutch football association (KNVB) confirmed the 51-year-old's impending exit on Tuesday, saying Van Basten was leaving to start work with the sport's global governing body.

"FIFA have offered me a chance to work in the

development and reform of football, and to use my ideas and opinions over issues like playing rules, refereeing and development programmes," Van Basten said in a KNVB statement.

"I have agreed with Danny Blind to stay as an assistant until the end of the year."

The loss of his deputy is the latest blow for Blind, who had asked another former European Footballer of the Year, Ruud Gullit, to assist him, only for negotiations to break down.

The acrimonious fallout between Gullit and the KNVB has since dominated Dutch sports pages at a time when the team are hoping to make a positive start to World Cup qualifying after the disappointment of missing the Euro

2016 finals in France.

The Netherlands start their campaign to reach the 2018 World Cup finals away at Sweden next Tuesday. Advocaat and Van Basten are both former national team coaches in their own right and were expected to form a powerful support team for Blind.

However, Advocaat left after just three months and Van Basten's impending departure is a further blow.

"Of course I'm not happy but the FIFA job is something that is tailor made for Marco. Even though it means I have to find another successor, it is a great opportunity for him," Blind said in a statement yesterday. — Reuters



Robbie Keane

ENGLAND SET NEW ODI RECORD OF 444-3 AGAINST PAKISTAN

NOTTINGHAM: England recorded the highest-ever team total in a one-day international when they made 444 for three against Pakistan at Trent Bridge yesterday.

In what was the 3,773rd match at this level England's total surpassed the previous record of 443 for nine by Sri Lanka against the Netherlands at Amstelveen in 2006. It was also the highest ODI total in a match between two Test nations, topping South Africa's 439 for two against the West Indies at Johannesburg last year. Alex Hales, on his Nottinghamshire home ground, made an England ODI

record 171 yesterday.

Jos Buttler followed up with the quickest-ever England ODI fifty, off just 22 balls, on his way to an unbeaten 90 off 51 balls featuring seven fours and seven sixes. Pakistan left-arm fast bowler Wahab Riaz, who twice took 'wickets' with no-balls, finished with figures of none for 110 in his maximum 10 overs. That was the second-most expensive return in an ODI, behind Australian Mick Lewis's none for 113 against South Africa at Johannesburg in 2006. England lead their five-match series with Pakistan 2-0. — AFP



NOTTINGHAM: England's Alex Hales celebrates his century during the third one day international cricket match, at Trent Bridge, Nottingham, England, yesterday. — AP