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# Sri Lanka keen to play Mendis in Kanpur

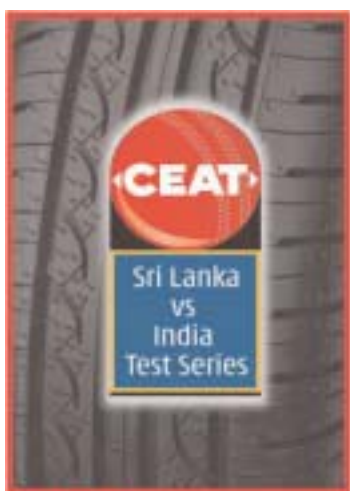
**Rex Clementine**  
reporting from Kanpur

Sri Lanka were figuring out the ideal bowling combination for the second Test against India that will get underway today here at the Green Park Stadium in Kanpur.

Ajantha Mendis, who stunned the Indians 15 months ago in his debut series claiming a world record 26 wickets in the three match series in Sri Lanka, is very likely to get a game, but whether that will be a straight swap for another spinner or whether the tourists will play three spin bowlers, was not certain.

The Sri Lankans trained last morning here in Green Park simultaneously with the Indians and they could pack the side with three spinners, with Mendis coming in as the third spinner behind Muttiah Muralitharan and Rangana Herath.

But the chilly conditions here could see them bringing in a fast bowler for Dammika Prasad, who is nursing a hamstring injury and has been ruled out of the game. In that case, Mendis is likely to get a game ahead of Herath, with Dilhara Fernando, a late replacement for the injured Thilan Thushara, making the



playing 11 ahead of Nuwan Kulasekara. "We can play three spinners if we want to, or else, we can replace Dammika Prasad with another fast bowler. We have quite a few combinations in mind, we would know for sure by evening," Sri

Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara told journalists, at the pre-match media conference.

Sri Lanka named a 13 member squad for the game, including Mendis, Kulasekara and Fernando, keeping their options open.

Opener Tillekeratne Dilshan, who broke his nose while playing football after the final day's play in the first Test in Ahmedabad trained yesterday with the team and will play today's game.

Indian captain M. S. Dhoni believed the track could assist bowlers more than it did in Ahmedabad and was himself looking at the option of making a few changes to his bowling combination. "The wicket looks as if there'll be a lot more assistance for spinners and fast bowlers. But I am not sure whether the low bounce will help them and whether the ball will help reverse swing. But overall, it will be a better wicket for the bowlers," he said.

The last time a Test was played here, two years ago, it ended in three days, with India beating South Africa to square the three match series. It was the spinners who did most of the damage in that Test after the previous Test, also in Ahmedabad, had been dominated by fast



Ajantha Mendis

bowlers.

Kanpur in fact has been hosting Test matches since 1951 and is the premier cricket ground of the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association. Of the 20 Tests played here, however, 12 games have ended in draws. India has won five matches, while touring teams have won three.

Sri Lanka do not have happy memories here as after posting 420 runs in the first innings, they were made to chase leather as the hosts piled up a mammoth 676 for seven in 1986, the highest total posted in this country until Sri Lanka put up 760 for seven in the last Test match in Ahmedabad.

It was in that game in 1986 that Mohammad Azharuddin scored 199, while Kapil Dev made 163.

**Teams:**  
**Sri Lanka (From):**

Tillekeratne Dilshan, Tharanga Paranavithana, Kumar Sangakkara (Captain), Mahela Jayawardene, Thilan Samaraweera, Angelo Mathews, Prasanna Jayawardene (wicketkeeper), Chanaka Welagedara, Muttiah Muralitharan, Ajantha Mendis, Rangana Herath, Dilhara Fernando and Nuwan Kulasekara.

**India (From):**  
Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, V.V.S. Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, M.S. Dhoni (Captain and wicketkeeper), Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Amit Mishra, Pragyan Ojah and Murali Vijay.

**Umpires:** Nigel Long (Eng) and Tony Hill (NZ)

**Match Referee:** Jeff Crowe (NZ)

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## Radeeka Hettiarachchi appeals for ban to be lifted

by Ravi Nagahawatte

Desperate Sri Lanka received some hopes of strengthening their side for the Carlton Sevens with the news that former Sri Lanka skipper and veteran rugby player Radeeka Hettiarachchi could receive the green light from the Sri Lanka Rugby Football Union (SLRFU), to represent the country.

Hettiarachchi, who's serving a two year ban from representing Sri Lanka, is reported to have tendered an apology and requested that the ban imposed is lifted. This is a procedure specified by the SLRFU to all banned players if they wish to represent the country before the ban expires. About 15 of the country's best players were slapped with bans when they refused to tour Dubai with the national team for the Asian Five Nations tournament. The majority of the original players named in the squad pulled out due to a dispute over the appointed captain. The players were banned following a directive by Sports Minister, Gamini Lokuge.

Rugby Interim Committee Chairman Dr. Maiya Gunasekera told 'The Island' that Hettiarachchi had tendered a letter of apology and the SLRFU would make the availability of the player known by Thursday. The player has made the appeal to the Sports Minister through the SLRFU.

Gunasekera acknowledged the fact that Hettiarachchi was practicing with the Sri Lanka team which will contest the Carlton Sevens, in the same pool with South

Korea and Pakistan.

Gunasekera, elaborating on Hettiarachchi's desire to make a comeback, to the national team said, "He seems to have realized his mistake and has promised in the letter never to repeat the act of shunning national duty again."

"He has realized that nobody is bigger than the game. Rugby players in this country must realize that they are there (playing) because of rugby and that the sport doesn't survive because of them," Gunasekera added.

Sri Lanka coach Imthie Marikar said that he would be delighted to have Hettiarachchi back, if possible. "He was the best player for Sri Lanka at the 2009 Hong Kong Sevens and all the experience he carries would benefit the team immensely," said Marikar.

Hettiarachchi was at his best at the Hong Kong Sevens this year, scoring two memorable tries against mighty Australia.

Sri Lanka's fitness trainer Mohotilal Jayatilake said that Hettiarachchi was training hard and should raise his fitness level a few notches, before the tournament begins on September 28 at the Sugathadasa Stadium, in Colombo.

Hettiarachchi has been the live-wire in sevens rugby and a solid fullback in the longer version of the game. He is at the tail-end of his career and rugby critics believe Hettiarachchi made the correct move in appealing to lift the ban, when there are provisions to do so. He represents Kandy Sports Club in domestic tournaments.

## ICC Player Rankings

### Mahela 'numero uno' in Tests

Former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardena achieved the number-one ranking in the Reliance Mobile ICC Player Rankings for Test batsmen for the first time in his career, after an epic double century in the drawn first Test against India at Ahmedabad, earlier this week.

The 32-year-old scored a masterly 275 - his sixth double century in 108 Tests - to leapfrog team-mate Kumar Sangakkara and Indian opener Gautam Gambhir.

Jayawardena, who during his mammoth knock became only the ninth batsman to complete 9,000 Test runs, is just 17 points short of becoming only the 25th batsman overall to reach the 900 point mark which, in ranking terms, which is the benchmark for top batsmen.

Before Jayawardena, Australia's Mike Hussey was the last batsman to reach the 900 point mark in the 131-year history of Test cricket when he achieved the rare distinction after the Sydney Test against India in January 2008.

Sangakkara scored 31 in Ahmedabad while Gambhir scored 1 and 114 which means that only seven points separate the two left-handers. With the second Test starting in Kanpur today, both stylish batsmen would be aiming to stamp their superiority over the other.

Also on the charge are the five other centurions from the Ahmedabad Test.

India's iconic batsman Sachin Tendulkar has moved up by one place to share 15th spot with England's Kevin Pietersen, Tillakaratne Dilshan has achieved a career best 18th position by improving his ranking by three places, Rahul Dravid has jumped five places to sit just outside the top 20 in 21st position. Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has leapedfrogged three places to 30th spot and Sri Lanka wicketkeeper-batsman Prasanna Jayawardena has vaulted 20 places to 60th position.



Mahela