

Goode set England challenge by Johnson

BAGSHOT (AFP) — Fly-half Andy Goode was told by England manager Martin Johnson to make the Test No 10 shirt his own after being recalled for Saturday's Six Nations opener against Italy at Twickenham.

Goode was selected for his first international in over two years after being named Tuesday in the starting line-up.

Renowned for both his place-kicking and kicking out of hand, Brive-based Goode is the leading points scorer in French top-flight rugby this season with 160 points in 16 games.

Goode was added to England's training squad in Portugal last week and stayed for the whole camp after being initially asked to attend for just the first two days.

The 28-year-old, preparing for only his fourth Test start, played the last of his nine England internationals against South Africa in November 2006.

That was Andy Robinson's last match in charge and Goode didn't feature during the brief tenure of Brian Ashton.

But with Toby Flood struggling with a calf injury, and Danny Cipriani demoted to the reserve Saxons side, Johnson has decided his old Leicester team-mate is the man for the job.

"He's playing well and he trained very well with us last week," Johnson told reporters at England's hotel here Tuesday.

"He's an experienced player, he's been around a long time," added Johnson.

"Andy is 28, he's not over the hill by any means. He's a different guy to the one I've played with, more mature as a player and a person. If he plays well, like anybody, he'll be difficult to dislodge."

Goode said: "It's down to me now. If I play well I hope to keep the shirt, if I don't there are other people snapping at my heels for the 10 shirt."

"I've broadened my horizons playing in the Top 14 in France after 10 good years at Leicester."

He added: "People say it's a strength of mine, game management, when's the time to run, when's the time to kick. It's a simple game rugby and you've got to get the game management right as a 10."

Goode also said he was a more rounded stand-off for having played in France. "A lot of it is heads-up rugby, you are encouraged to play what you see and believe in."

In November, England suffered convincing defeats at the hands of Australia, world champions South Africa and New Zealand.

Cipriani featured against the Wallabies and the Springboks before Flood, Goode's Leicester successor, was drafted in to face the All Blacks.

The talented but erratic Cipriani found himself demoted to the reserve team Saxons on Monday and Johnson said: "We thought it was the right call for Danny."

"He's come back from a very serious injury and came back pretty well in November in a team that struggled."

"In no way is Danny discarded, he's only 21-years-old. Most guys haven't even started playing internationals at that age and he's been in for a year. The best thing he can do is have a great game on Friday (against Ireland A)."

Johnson also handed a Test debut to London Irish back-row Steffon Armitage, who will line up alongside brother Delon, England's full-back at Twickenham, following injuries to Michael Lipman, Tom Rees and Lewis Moody.

The Armitages became the first pair of brothers to play in the same England team since Rory and Tony Underwood in the 1990s.

U.S. badminton women heading to Tehran

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — U.S. women's badminton team will take part in the Fajr International Badminton Tournament held in Tehran's Shiroudi Stadium, scheduled for February 5-8th.

A delegation of 12 Americans, including eight athletes, coaches and managers, will participate in the prestigious tournament, at the invitation of the Iranian Badminton Federation, the U.S. State Department said.

USA Badminton (USAB) looks forward to hosting the Iranian Badminton Federation for the U.S. Open in July.

This visit is part of the people-to-people exchanges with Iran. Since 2006, the U.S. Department of State has included Iranians in a range of educational, professional, and cultural exchange programs. In the past two years, over 250 Iranians, including artists, athletes, and medical professionals, have participated in exchange programs in the United States.

Through its Sports United program, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has brought the Iranian national



teams for basketball, water polo, weightlifting, and members of the men's and women's Nation-

Milan 'ready for Galaxy talks to keep Beckham'

ROME (AFP) — AC Milan chief Adriano Galliani said Tuesday the club would do everything in its power to keep English midfielder David Beckham, who has been loaned to the Italian club by American outfit Los Angeles Galaxy.

Asked if Beckham wanted to remain with the club, Galliani told Gazzetta dello Sport Tuesday: "I think so, yes. But I can speak only on behalf of the club, and we will do everything we can to keep Beckham after March."

Beckham was initially scheduled to return to the Major Soccer League after his three-month loan spell, but recent reports suggested the former Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder wanted to remain in Milan.

Since arriving in the fashionable northern Italian city in early January Beckham has managed to win the hearts of the Milan fans, who have seen the club climb up the Serie A table to second place within six points of city rivals Inter.

Galliani now sees Beckham as an integral part of a team that he hopes will win the championship at the end of the season, but he warned that proper negotiations with LA Galaxy would have to be held.

"It's clear we want to keep him until the end of the season or at least until we secure the championship," added Galliani.

"The hope is there but contracts also have to be honored. If Galaxy want to come to the negotiating table we would be more than happy to talk about a deal."

Bryant lights up MSG, Knicks with record 61 points

By The Associated Press

Kobe Bryant had plenty of motivation for his record-setting performance at Madison Square Garden.

With a postgame work date planned with Knicks fan Spike Lee, who was sitting in the front row, Bryant put on a show the filmmaker couldn't criticize, setting a current arena record with 61 points to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a 126-117 victory over New York on Monday night.

"I'm going to review this documentary I'm doing with Spike Lee tonight after the game and I didn't feel like sitting next to him and hearing him talking trash about the Knicks, so that was added incentive as well," Bryant said. "Seriously. He's going to get an earful tonight."

Bryant entertained a sold-out crowd that took turns booing him and saluting him with "MVP!" chants during an electrifying performance.

He bested Michael Jordan's opponent record of 55 points at the present building, known as "Garden IV," when he hit three free throws with 3:56 remaining, then broke Bernard King's overall mark of 60, set on Christmas Day 1984, with two more foul shots with 2:33 to play.

Bryant, who also had the highest-scoring game in the NBA this season, left to a loud ovation after his fifth 40-point game at MSG, where the Knicks played their first game in February 1968.

"It's a blessing to do what you love and to have moments like this," Bryant said.

In other NBA games Monday, it was: Dallas 105, Orlando 95; Memphis 113, Washington 97; Miami 119, the Los Angeles Clippers 95; Portland 97, New Orleans 89; Phoenix 129, Sacramento 81; Utah 105, Charlotte 86; and San Antonio 110, Golden State 105 in overtime.

In New York, Pau Gasol added 31 points and 14 rebounds in the Lak-

ers' first game since losing center Andrew Bynum for eight to 12 weeks with a torn medial collateral ligament in his right knee.

The Lakers didn't miss him with Bryant going 19-of-31 from the field with an array of tough jumpers, powerful drives and a perfect 20-for-20 from the free throw line.

Bynum was hurt Saturday at Memphis when Bryant crashed into his leg after driving to the basket. The center isn't expected to need surgery and said he was confident he would return in time for the playoffs.

Lamar Odom moved into the starting lineup and Gasol slid to the center spot to replace Bynum. Odom had six points and 14 rebounds.

Al Harrington scored 24 points and David Lee had 22 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, who had won six of seven but didn't have the firepower to stay with the Western Conference leaders in the opener of a brutal week. New York plays Boston and Cleveland, too.

"We tried to do the rope-a-dope a little bit where he (Bryant) might shoot himself out, but he didn't," Knicks coach Mike D'Antoni said. "He just kept on going."

Trail Blazers 97, Hornets 89

At New Orleans, LaMarcus Aldridge scored 22 points and Portland overcame a 17-point deficit — after Hornets guard Chris Paul was injured — for its fifth straight victory.

Paul left the game late in the third quarter with a strained right groin, the first action he has missed all season. He had 12 points and 13 assists.

The Hornets led 72-55 when Paul left the game. Portland then outscored New Orleans 26-7 during the next seven minutes, with Jerryd Bayless scoring 13 of his 19 points during the decisive surge.

Mavericks 105, Magic 95

At Orlando, Fla., Dirk Nowitzki had 29 points and six rebounds and Jason Terry scored 23 to lead Dallas to its third straight win.

Dwight Howard had 35 points and 11 rebounds as the Magic's three-game winning streak ended.

All-Star point guard Jameer Nelson left the game in the third quarter with a dislocated right shoulder. He was scheduled to have an MRI on Tuesday.

Grizzlies 113, Wizards 97

scored 16 of his 24 points in the first quarter, Amare Stoudemire finished with 25 points and eight rebounds and the rejuvenated Suns ended a three-game home losing skid with their most lopsided victory of the season.

John Salmons led the Kings with 19 points.



At Washington, rookie O.J. Mayo matched his career high with 33 points to help the Grizzlies end a 12-game skid.

Antawn Jamison had 29 points and 13 rebounds for Washington.

Heat 119, Clippers 95

At Miami, Dwyane Wade had 32 points and nine assists, Michael Beasley added 18 points and the Heat snapped a two-game skid.

Shawn Marion — in his first game back after missing five straight with a strained left groin — finished with 11 points and seven rebounds for the Heat.

Zach Randolph, back after missing 19 games with a sore left knee, scored 21 points for the Clippers.

Suns 129, Kings 81

At Phoenix, Jason Richardson

Jazz 105, Bobcats 86

At Salt Lake City, Ronnie Brewer scored 14 of his 21 points in the second half and the injury-riddled Jazz rallied from a sluggish start.

Raymond Felton had 16 points and nine assists to lead the Bobcats.

Spurs 110, Warriors 105, OT

At Oakland, Calif., Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobili each had season highs with 32 points apiece and San Antonio overcame a 12-point deficit in the fourth quarter to force overtime.

Duncan added 15 rebounds for his 30th double-double and the Spurs won their fourth straight.

Stephen Jackson scored a season-high 33 points for the Warriors.

Iranian GM beats Anatoly Karpov

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iranian chess Grandmaster Ehsan Ghaem Maghami defeated Russian GM and former world champion Anatoly Karpov 10/5 to 9/5 out of 20 games last night.

Ghaem Maghami played the Russian in three classic, rapid and blitz events in a six-day tournament, consisting of 20 matches.

The Iranian GM was awarded \$26,000 while Karpov earned \$13,000. Mohammad Aliabadi, the head of Iran's Physical Education Organization (PEO) presented a Peugeot 405 to Ghaem Maghami in recognition of this victory.

Karpov was the undisputed World Champion from 1975 to 1985, repeatedly challenged to regain the title from 1986 to 1990, and then was FIDE World Champion from 1993 to 1999.

Ghaem Maghami, who has participated in more than 40 international events, has an Elo rating of 2604.

The matches were judged by a referee from the Philippines.

Butt extends Newcastle deal

Newcastle deal

NEWCASTLE, England (AFP) — Former England and Manchester United midfielder Nicky Butt looks set to end his career at Newcastle after extending his contract at the club until the end of next season.

Butt, who turned 34 last month, joined Newcastle in 2004. He spent the 2005/06 season on loan at Birmingham but has since established himself as one of the mainstays of the Magpies side.

Goalkeeper Steve Harper and striker Shola Ameobi have also recently signed new deals at Newcastle while Danish winger Peter Lovrenkrands, midfielder Kevin Nolan and defender Ryan Taylor were all recruited during the transfer window that closed on Monday evening.

French midfielder Charles N'Zogbia and first-choice goalkeeper Shay Given both left the club with N'Zogbia joining Wigan in a deal that resulted in Taylor moving in the opposite direction and Given heading for Manchester City.

Those deals netted Newcastle around 12 million pounds. Only one third of that money was reinvested with Nolan's capture from Bolton costing the club four million.

South Africans go 'wild' as Open returns

Open returns

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Local 'wildcards' Rik de Voest and Raven Klaasen upset Spanish opponents Monday as the SA Tennis Open returned to the ATP scene after a 14-year absence.

De Voest always had the edge over sixth seed Ivan Navarro en route to a 6-3, 6-4 win while Raven Klaasen overcame early nerves to oust Ruben Ramirez Hidalgo 6-3, 7-5 at the Tuscan-style Montecasino entertainment centre.

The tournament began with Leonardo Mayer outplaying Sergio Roitman 6-2, 6-4 in an all-Argentina duel and German Simon Gruel was another straight-set winner, eliminating Romanian Victor Crivoi 6-2, 6-4 on the second court.

Warm, overcast weather greeted competitors at a venue transformed from a car park to four courts within a few months and South Africans did not have to wait long for something to celebrate.

Milan-born De Voest is ranked 162 in the world - 89 places below Navarro - but the few hundred spectators at the first of two sessions never would have believed that fact as the aggressive South African dominated.