

## News briefly

### Saracens coach given warning

SARACENS director of rugby Brendan Venter, pictured, has been warned not to repeat Saturday's Mike Bassett-inspired interview when his side play in Europe this weekend. Venter held a bizarre minute-long interview on Saturday where he provided almost no opinion on his side's 24-21 Heineken Cup defeat to Racing Metro and kept repeating questions. The exchange was inspired by comedy film Mike Bassett: England Manager but European Rugby Cup have said they do not expect a repeat.



### Hoping snow stays away

HARROW Rugby Club return to league action this weekend after their match with Sudbury & London Springboks was called off on Saturday. The second string's match with Hackney Seconds was also postponed so both sides will be hoping the predicted bad weather will not affect the fixtures this weekend. The first team will look to consolidate their lead at the top of the table away to Northolt and the Lions travel to Cheshunt in the Merit Table Cup.

# Strauss: 'We can't let the Aussies recover'

by FRANK SMITH  
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MIDDLESEX batsman Andrew Strauss has warned of an Australian backlash when the third Ashes Test begins today (Thursday) after England's emphatic victory in Adelaide.

England went 1-0 up in the series following their comprehensive win in the second Test and the visitors only need one more victory from the final three Tests to retain the Ashes.

However, Strauss has warned against complacency going into the match in Perth.

He said: "It is important we don't let Australia back in the series now. You never know what is around the corner. It is easy to take things for granted and go on the same course as before but the likelihood is it won't be like that and we have to be ready to scrap.

"If we're prepared and dig deep as the series goes on we're in a great position.

"If anyone is thinking of us going to draw the last three Test matches, they're well off the mark. Not many matches end up being drawn and the plan for us is to win."

Much of the media attention in the build-up to this Test has centred around England fast bowler James Anderson returning home for the birth of his daughter, Ruby, on Friday.

Anderson did not arrive back in Australia until Monday and opposition captain Ricky Ponting believes he will suffer as a result of two long-haul flights in quick succession.

The Lancashire bowler joined practice on Tuesday though, and Strauss expects the 28-year-old to continue to play a crucial role for England.

Strauss, who took only his third first-class wicket in a warm-up game with Victoria on Saturday, said: "He's fine. It was a great thing for him to have gone back and everything go well with the birth of his daughter.

"He's got a spring in his step and thankfully he wasn't away long enough to feel the effects of jet-lag. He is back into it and keen to play his part on Thursday.

"It is not all about cricket, there is more to a cricketer than



In conversation: Andrew Strauss talks to Tim Bresnan, who is being tipped to replace the injured Stuart Broad for the third Test. Picture: ACTION IMAGES

what happens on a cricket pitch," Strauss continued.

"It was a decision he was very strong on. He wanted to be at the birth and he feels very happy that he was able to do that, and even more so that he was able to get back here in time for this Test match.

"We spend a lot of time away from home. We're looking for balanced people in our side and not just people who are thinking cricket 24 hours a day - that is not particularly helpful."

## Last-gasp heartache

WEALDSTONE suffered heartbreak as they bowed out of the FA Trophy deep into extra-time on Monday night after keeping out high-flying Conference side Newport County for 209 minutes.

The Stones kept a clean sheet in the initial tie on Saturday and did the same again at home to Dean Holdsworth's side on Monday night to send the match into the additional half hour.

With only two minutes of extra-time remaining, Wealdstone substitute Ben Long had the chance to send his side through but his effort went narrowly wide and Newport's Dave Challinor grabbed the winner just a minute before the game was set for penalties.

Wealdstone can now concentrate solely on the league but Gordon Bartlett's men can take great heart from their performances against a team who, in lying fourth in the Conference, are 54 league places above the Stones in the football pyramid.

Wealdstone travel to Folkestone Invicta in the Ryman Premier on Saturday before their clash with local rivals Harrow Borough on December 27.

Harrow are on a great run of form after extending their winning run to eight matches in all competitions on Tuesday night.

David Howell's side followed Saturday's 3-1 victory over Kingstonian by beating Billericay Town by the same scoreline three days later.

Harrow have now scored three goals in five of their last six matches.

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