

French International Test Match rained off

By Jan Wikramaratna, our special correspondent in Rouen

Crowds of thousands – mostly supporters of the local P&LCC team – were being turned away by Police on the roads near Rouen where the annual Test Match was due to start this morning. During the night, huge traffic jams had developed on the incoming motorways as cricketing enthusiasts gathered for the party.



Huge crowds (and clouds) had been gathering near Rouen

Shocking overnight rain

Many of the visitors come from all over France for this major event in the cricketing calendar, and view the sport with a deeply romantic vision – the wicket; the batsman defending it against the attacks of the fielders and bowlers – and they look forward to the chance to speak with the local cricketing team who have been in excellent form in recent years.

The reality today has been a shock. Heavy and continuous overnight rain turned the pitch into a muddy puddle. Although the groundsmen have been working since 4.00 A.M., they have not been able to clear the excess water – and more rain is expected during the morning.

Special *ad hoc* food and concert

Play will not start at all today. It is expected that the muddy pitch problems will last for several days, and this may lead to cancellation of the whole three-day Test Match including the final innings on Thursday.

Police and local authorities said that special camps were being set up to hold the disappointed spectators while the traffic jams subside. Food and drink will be provided, although some of the unfortunate people will have to answer a series of qualifying questions, and others may have to help in the kitchens, before being allowed to eat.

Special concerts are being arranged, to take place on Tuesday afternoon and late on Thursday evening. The authorities hope that this will help to satisfy some of the disappointed spectators and players.

Météo France [the French equivalent of the Met Office] have so far been unable to provide a clear forecast for the three days of the Test Match.

Medical teams with psychologists, doctors and nurses – and other disaster recovery services – have also been alerted to help visitors get over the shock of the cancellation.

In addition a special 24-hour hotline has been set up to counsel any who remain stuck in hopeless despair, unable to take part in the Annual French International Test Match.