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to tropical conditions, spend their time in the field clutching the hand warmers that are concealed deep within their trouser pockets. Spectators arrive fully equipped for every meteorological possibility, so it is with relief all round that the switch has been made to delay the Test series against Sri Lanka until June, and kick off the international summer with the shorter, busier limited overs matches.

In fact, this is a big year for one-day cricket with the World Cup due to be staged in Australia and New Zealand in February and March. England remain one of the few senior teams never to have won despite appearing in the final three times, and it is ironic now to consider that last winter's disastrous Ashes campaign was brought forward by a year to improve their prospects. Previously the World Cup was played on the back of a gruelling Ashes campaign in Australia and it was argued that the players were simply too tired to recover properly. Well, there can be no such excuse this time but the bottom line is that England have just 20 matches between now and their World Cup opener on Valentine's Day to rebuild their team

after their 4-1 defeat to Australia and the sacking of their most dangerous one-day player, Kevin Pietersen.

Even with Pietersen in the team, England lacked the carefree approach of many opposition batsmen, which has seriously hampered their prospects in the past. Encouraging an attacking mindset is just one of the challenges facing the recently restored coach, Peter Moores.

One thing is certain: there will be no more resting of the leading players that I still believe was one of the causes of England's dramatic collapse last year. The decision to field virtually a second XI in the one-day series after the Ashes last summer dismayed spec-

tators who had paid up to £70 for a ticket in advance to see the best, and it gave Australia the welcome opportunity to win some matches and regain confidence. The decision also smacked of arrogance and I hope it is just one of many lessons learned as England take their first steps into a new era.

'England lacked the dangerous approach of opposition batsmen'



This week would usually see us gathering at Lord's for the first Test match of the summer. The congested international timetable is the principal reason for playing so early in the summer, but it is also a good opportunity to ambush the opposition who, invariably used