



Warne to try hand at poker

AUSTRALIAN Test cricket great and spin bowling wizard Shane Warne will begin a new career as a poker professional, reports said yesterday.

Warne, who retired from test cricket last year with a record 708 wickets, had signed with online poker company 888.com to play the World Series of Poker, won by his Australian poker mentor Joe Hachem in 2005.

"Nothing will replace the 20 years of cricket in my life, but there are a lot of similarities," Warne told the Herald Sun newspaper. "It's a game of skill that has a lot of analogies to cricket. You have to be very, very disciplined."

Throughout his cricketing career Warne attracted as much controversy off the field as he did on it, with suspension for passing tips to an Indian bookmaker and

the breakup of his marriage over extramarital affairs and phone text scandals.

He also served a ban for testing positive to a prohibited diuretic and in 1999 was charged with bringing the game into disrepute after criticising Sri Lanka's captain.

But Warne is also acknowledged as one of the finest leg spin bowlers the world has seen and in 2000 was the only bowler selected as one of the five Wisden Cricketers of the Century.

Warne said he had been playing poker with friends for five years and more recently had been taking instructions from Hachem, who he saw every week.

His first game as a professional would be at this week's Aussie Millions tournament in Melbourne. "My attitude is I've got a lot more to learn about the

game," he said.

Warne said he expected to play poker in the United States, New Zealand, South Africa and Britain this year, while filling a development role for Australia's promising spin bowlers. - Reuters



Shane Warne