

ICC, BCCI to talk Champs Trophy

REUTERS, New Delhi

International Cricket Council (ICC) officials were to meet members of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday to sort out differences over venues and contracts for this year's Champions Trophy.

BCCI secretary Niranjan Singh told Reuters on Friday the board wanted the world governing body to ease conditions in the contract to allow Mumbai and Delhi to retain existing endorsement deals.

The biennial one-day tournament is scheduled from October 7 to November 5.

Captains call for calm

REUTERS, Karachi

The captains of Pakistan and India have called for the third and final Test starting on Sunday to be contested in a sporting manner while playing down reported sledging incidents in the drawn Lahore and Faisalabad matches.

"If the incidents had been serious the match referee would have reported the players," Pakistan skipper Inzamamul Haq told a news conference on the eve of the series decider.

"I think these things have been overplayed and cricket is played with aggression. Relations are good between players, who know the importance of not allowing things to get out of hand."

India captain Rahul Dravid echoed Inzamam's sentiments.

"Both teams know the importance of the series and I am sure the players are aware of their responsibilities," he said.

Square Cup golf held

SPORTS REPORTER

Maj Md Atiq Mahmud clinched the men's title while Medeau Pascale won the women's crown in the Square Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday.

A total of 389 golfers including 23 ladies took part in the two-day meet.

Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lieutenant General Moen U Ahmed distributed prizes among the winners. Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals Limited, along with other high officials of Square Group attended the function.

OTHER RESULTS

Senior winner: Col Oli Ahmed (ret); Junior winner: Master Shiam; Runner-up: Col Manzur Murshed (ret); Ladies Runner-up: Fatima Matlur; Best Gross: Brig Gen Sharif Uddin; Front Nine winner: JO Park; Back Nine winner: Gp Capt Shahul Islam (ret); Nearest to Pin: Air Cdre Zilani; Longest Drive: Mario Zavaley; Winner Nine Hole: A T M Abdul Bair; Runner-up Nine Hole: Col Lutfur Rahman; Senior winner Nine Hole: AWahed.

19 join Cruciani camp

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A total of 19 booters reported to the national coach Andres Cruciani for the camp beginning Monday.

Rajani Kanta Barman, Arman Aziz and Mehdi Hasan Ujjal didn't report due to their personal problems and they are expected to join tomorrow.

The national team will prepare for their upcoming Asian Cup Qualifying matches.

All focus

FROM PAGE 12 Field, vice-captain Younis Khan will lead the hosts while left-handed opener Imran Farhat and middle-order batsman Faisal Iqbal could both play.

Inzamam confirmed that pace spearhead Shoaib Akhtar was fit from a niggle in the left ankle and was certain to take part in the decider.

"I want to play three specialist seamers," said the Pakistan captain, hinting that the other two places would be a toss-up between Mohammad Asif, Navedul Hasan, Umar Gul and Mohammad Sami.

TEAMS

INDIA (from): Rahul Dravid (captain), Yirender Sehraw, Venkatesh Laxman, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Dhoni, Irfan Pathan, Ajit Agarkar, Zaheer Khan, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Rudra Pratap Singh.

PAKISTAN (from): Inzamamul Haq (captain), Salman Butt, Imran Farhat, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Faisal Iqbal, Shahid Afridi, Shoaib Akhtar, Navedul Hasan, Danish Kaneria, Mohammad Asif, Umar Gul, Mohammad Sami, Arshad Khan.

Umpires: Daryl Harper and Simon Taufel.



Nigeria's John Obi Mikel (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Zimbabwe during their African Nations Cup match at the Port Said Stadium on Friday.

Super Eagles flying high

AFP, Cairo



Two-time African Nations Cup winners Nigeria moved closer to the last eight on Friday after beating Zimbabwe 2-0 in their Group D clash. However while Zimbabwe will be going home after the last match, World Cup finals debutants Ghana ensured a nervy final round of matches for them and Senegal as they beat the 2002 finalists 1-0 in an ill-tempered match that saw both sides finish with 10 men.

With Ghana due to round off the group stage against pointless and goalless Zimbabwe the odds are on them progressing at the expense of Senegal, who play Nigeria.

Senegal and Ghana have three points each after two rounds with the Teranga Lions enjoying a marginally better goal difference.

The Super Eagles may have missed out on the World Cup finals but they, like fellow absentees Cameroon, have shown a clean pair of heels to their opponents so far and they made no mistake with Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwians did create chances with Portsmouth's Benjami looking sharp but they finally cracked twice in four minutes in the second-half.

First Udinese's Christian Obodo rose above the defence to head home a corner and then on the hour mark substitute and highly

rated teenager John Obi Mikel scored with a shot from the edge of the area to show why Manchester United and Chelsea are in a tug of war over signing him.

Nigeria coach Austin Eguavoen expressed his delight at making the last eight as his side attempt to win their first Nations Cup title since 1994, but warned Senegal they could expect no let up just because they were already through.

"I was satisfied with my team's overall performance," said Eguavoen.

"It was a tough game against Zimbabwe and I expect another tough match against Senegal. But I have a team that is focussed and capable of beating any team. We will work harder and with some luck we will achieve our targets here."

Zimbabwe coach Charles Mhlauri blamed lapses in concentration in his defence for their defeat.

"We lost concentration in the defence in the second half. But against Ghana we will not lie down, we will take the game very seriously so as to take something back home," he said.

Ghana dug deep to get the win they desperately needed so as to keep their hopes alive as Borussia Dortmund striker Matthew Amoah got the only goal against Senegal.

He burst past slow-reacting defender Lamine Diatta from a long throw-in before beating Tony Sylva with a shot from an acute angle.

Ghana were far more enterpris-

ing than they had been in the 1-0 defeat by Nigeria, something which their coach Ratomir Djukovic said had been imperative.

"We played differently from the game against Nigeria because we did not have any option but to win," he said.

"We played with more strikers but at the same time, my fullbacks did not join the attack like they did against Nigeria because we know Senegal have some quick and excellent strikers."

Senegal coach Abdoulaye Sarr said his team did not play well and will have to be at their best to beat Nigeria on Tuesday.

"Ghana were better organised. They were also highly motivated. This was not the case with my team," said Sarr.

"But we will do our best to ensure we beat Nigeria in our last game and qualify for the quarterfinals."

Meanwhile, both Egypt and Libya paid for bad behaviour by sections of their supporters in Tuesday's Group A double header at the Cairo International Stadium.

The disciplinary committee of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) fined the Egyptian federation 5,000 dollars and their Libyan counterparts 7,000 dollars after their fans exchanged taunts and threw objects at each other at half-time of the 0-0 draw between Egypt and Morocco.

The Libyan fans had stayed on after their earlier 2-1 defeat by Ivory Coast.

Drogba dropped for Egypt clash

AFP, Cairo

Ivory Coast captain Didier Drogba was sensationally dropped to the bench for their final African Nations Cup Group A match against hosts Egypt on Saturday.

The 27-year-old Chelsea star - scorer of two of their three goals so far - reportedly had a bust-up with coach Henri Michel at training on Friday according.

Michel was unhappy when Drogba kept the squad waiting on the bus for 15 minutes at their hotel and when they got to the training ground the Frenchman ordered the player back to the hotel.

Ivory Coast have already qualified for the last eight but need a point against Egypt to ensure they finish top and probably avoid Michel's nightmare scenario of playing Cameroon in the quarterfinals.

Fowler back at Liverpool

AFP, London

Robbie Fowler made a shock return to his first love Liverpool on Friday and admitted he never dreamt he would be handed the chance to play again for his hometown club.

The 30-year-old ex-England striker scored 120 goals in 210 league appearances in nine years in his first spell at Anfield before joining Leeds for 11 million pounds in November 2001.

Fowler moved to Manchester City for six million pounds in January 2003 but has not started a Premiership game this season under Stuart Pearce after missing the start of it with a back injury.

"Honest to God, I'm so happy it's frightening. I'm just so chuffed," said Fowler who has joined Rafael Benitez's team on a free transfer.

"Deep down I have always wanted to come back and it has been a long time but I'm glad to say I'm back now."

"When I did leave I played against Sunderland and I got taken off at half-time and I never got a proper chance to say good-bye. It will be nice to get back out at Anfield wearing the red shirt again. Just to walk back out the tunnel will be amazing."

I'm a Milan man for life: Kaka

INTERNET, undated

Brazilian star Kaka has pledged to stay with Milan for the rest of his career, but admits Carlo Ancelotti has changed his management style.

"I want to stay with the Rossoneri for my whole life," smiled the creative midfielder. "This is the top club in the world, so to go anywhere else would be a step backwards. I don't ever want to leave."

The former Sao Paulo star arrived for under 5 million pounds in 2003 and made an immediate impact on Serie A, scoring 24 goals in 86 games.

The 23-year-old is in the mood for settling down at the moment, having married his sweetheart Caroline during the Christmas break.

Rahim exudes

FROM PAGE 12 matches against United Arab Emirates (UAE), the team is now well prepared," he said.

"We don't rely on one or two players which is our main strength. The team has batting depth to put pressure on the opponents. The bowling attack comprises a branch of wicket pacers, who are capable of taking early advantage of the pitch. And most importantly we have a very strong spin department," he said.

The Australian, however, believed that the tournament opener against New Zealand was very important.

Allister said that he has no idea about his two opponents New Zealand and Uganda but it would not be a big factor.

"We can see our opponents in the practice matches. Most importantly the condition is very familiar with most of the boys," he added.

Many think that the pace attack is not up to the mark compared to the other department but manager Golan Navsher Prince didn't agree it.

"They (pacers) can bowl in right area which is most important in the shorter-version game, so you can't say the pace department is weak," said the former left-arm pacer.

Bangladesh, who will place two practice matches against USA (February 2) and Zimbabwe (February 3), will play one of four tournament openers against New Zealand on February 5 at P Saravanamuthu Stadium.

The second match against Pakistan will be held on February 8 at Nondescripts Cricket Stadium while the last group match against Uganda is billed for the next day (February 9) at Singhalese Sports Club ground.

Becks wants focus on WC

Football

AFP, London

England captain David Beckham wants the nation to forget the controversy surrounding coach Sven-Goran Eriksson leaving and concentrate on the team winning the World Cup.

Eriksson is leaving after the World Cup, two years before his contract was due to expire, after five turbulent years in the job.

The Football Association are now searching a successor who they plan to have in place before the World Cup starts in Germany.

But Beckham wants the focus to return to England's attempts to win the tournament for the first time since 1966.

"The most important thing is we move on from this. For two weeks it's been a circus and the focus has been taken away from the team and what we want to accomplish in the World Cup finals. We need to stick together and forget what has happened," Beckham told The

Sun. "I didn't know Sven was going, I had no clue whatsoever. It's sad but, hopefully, in the end it might not be sad at all. If we go all the way in the competition, it would be a great ending for him."

Beckham does not believe that England's chances will be ham-



DAVID BECKHAM pered by the uncertainty concerning a new manager. "Yes, there's a new manager

coming in, but Sven's the one who will be taking us to Germany. People ask if it will affect morale but it won't. It's the biggest competition in the game and we want to win it."

"Every one of the players has a great relationship with this manager. We will stick by him and he will stick by us."

Beckham insisted that he was not pining for the Premiership and that his main concern was for Real Madrid's success.

"Every summer there have been rumours about me going back. Of course I discussed it with Sven when I met up with England but I'm happy in Madrid right now and all that's missing is a trophy."

England have been drawn alongside Croatia, Russia, Israel, Estonia, Macedonia and Andorra in Group E for the Euro 2008 qualification campaign, and Beckham admits it could have been tougher.

"There are some tricky games in there. It's a cliché but there are no easy games. Having said that, it could have been harder."

BUNDESLIGA

Makaay sends Bayern clear

Football

AFP, undated

The six-week winter break failed to knock Bayern Munich out of their stride as they got back into the groove with a 3-1 win over Borussia Monchengladbach on Friday to move nine points clear at the Bundesliga summit.

Dutch international Roy Makaay had failed to score in friendly games during the break but showed he had not lost his golden touch producing two predatory strikes to move into double figures for the season.

Incredibly 19-time champions Bayern had not won at Gladbach, one of their bogey teams, since 1998 and failed to find the net in seven barren years.

Makaay ended the wait after just 13 minutes taking advantage of a kind deflection to slot calmly past US international goalkeeper Kasey Keller.

"It was a good performance and we had the game under control for the most part," said Michael Ballack.

"It was good that Roy got back among the goals again. He is a key player for us and showed that tonight."

Gladbach, a surprise package this season in seventh, may have hoped Bayern's midweek cup outing - where they needed 120 minutes to beat Mainz 05 3-2 - had

sapped their energy but nothing could be further from the truth.

Bayern pushed on and doubled their lead in the 55th minute with German international captain Ballack producing a trademark free-kick.

Ballack, who has yet to reveal his plans for when his contract expires at the end of the season, curled a ferocious free-kick over the wall leaving Keller with no chance.

But with Bayern coach Felix

Magath already thinking about taking the points home Gladbach scored straight from the restart.

Belgian international forward Wesley Sonck was on hand to side-

foot in after the visitors switched off.

However it was to be Makaay's night and in the 69th minute he showed great technique to unleash a sublime first-time volley that left Keller's net bulging.

"I had a good feeling before the game and felt I would score," said Makaay. "My confidence was high after the first goal and I think you could see that from the way I took the third goal."



Bayern Munich striker Roy Makaay celebrates his strike against Moenchengladbach on Friday.

Magath already thinking about taking the points home Gladbach scored straight from the restart.

With big games still to come Magath pulled off Makaay just ten minutes after his wonder strike and the Dutch star got a standing ovation from the travelling fans.

Mauresmo's moment comes

FROM PAGE 12

Known for getting tight at crucial times, Mauresmo really had nothing to get nervous about this time. She won 19 of the first 24 points en route to a 5-0 lead.

Henin-Hardenne called the trainer after falling behind 2-0 in the second set and played only two more points.

"Last night, I was feeling so bad I thought I would have to go to see a doctor at 3 in the morning because I was such in pain," said Henin-Hardenne, who went into the match on a 13-match Melbourne Park winning streak.

"I knew at the beginning of the match I couldn't win it. You always want to try because you know it's a Grand Slam final. If I would have kept playing, maybe I would injure something else. I have no regrets."

Mauresmo had the second-longest wait for her first major title in

the Open era, 32 Grand Slam events. Jana Novotna won Wimbledon in 1998, her 45th major.

"I worked so hard, came close many times," Mauresmo said. "Finally this is it. Finally!"

Henin-Hardenne has four Grand Slam singles titles, including the 2004 Australian Open crown that she couldn't defend last year due to injury. She burst into tears when she reached a court-side chair after quitting.

"I don't know what is harder, to lose even when you're playing well or when you have to retire like that," Henin-Hardenne said.

Despite a recent rash of injuries, she said she doesn't feel jinxed and hopes she'll be able to play again in a few days.

Storms outside produced the only thunder of the match. The stadium roof was closed, trapping several birds inside, and they chirped loudly throughout.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP QAJMYV LWY CJ L BLXI EZY MYVVCFSQ EAJZ FBVQ. VLGFBQ LSX WAPMZFQ. "J P F F Q MYVGLSI." Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A TURTLE HAD TO DO SOME REFUELING, I SUPPOSE HE MIGHT STOP AT A SHELL STATION. Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals A. The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.