

CHAMPIONS TROPHY PCB worried over safety

INTERNET, undated

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials voiced concerns over player safety at this year's ICC Champions Trophy in India -- but said on Wednesday that it was too early to think about withdrawing from the event.

Saleem Altaf, the PCB's director of cricket operations, said that they would monitor the prevailing situation in Mumbai and other parts of India before taking a final decision on participating in the event, which runs from October 7 to November 5.

Altaf told Pakistani newspaper the News: "The recent bombings in Mumbai are a cause for concern, but we are confident that the International Cricket Council (ICC) will take care of the players' safety issue.

"There are still more than 10 weeks to go before the start of the Champions Trophy, so no panic buttons are being pressed just yet."

Pakistan are not scheduled to play any of their group matches in Mumbai. The Indian government has held Pakistan directly responsible for the blasts in Mumbai last week.

Gaudio crashes out of Stuttgart

AFP, Stuttgart

Top seed Gaston Gaudio led the exodus of seeds from the Stuttgart ATP tournament when he was knocked out by fellow Argentinian Mariano Zabaleta 6-4, 6-0.

Also going out were Belgian sixth seed Kristof Vliegen and Juan Ignacio Chela, the eighth seed.

Zabaleta will next meet Peru's Luis Horna who knocked out Spanish veteran Albert Portas 7-6 (7/4), 6-2.

"I was so frustrated after the first set. It's hard to see how I'm playing lately," said Gaudio.

"I'm very disappointed and have to face the problem. I want to play my best tennis again, but lately I was exhausted and my level of play was bad."

Vliegen retired with a right shoulder injury, while trailing Argentine Juan Monaco 6-3, 1-0 while Juan Martin Del Potro enjoyed a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 win over Chela.

JUBO KABADDI

Jessore versus Dhaka finale

BSS, Dhaka

Jessore stormed into the final of the Banglalink IGP Cup National Jubo Kabaddi Championship when they crushed Faridpur 33-16 in the second semifinal at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

The winners will meet Dhaka in the final slated for July 24 at the same venue.

Sachin back

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Anil Kumble was once again left out of the one-day squad despite the leg-spinner being India's most successful bowler in both forms of the game with 533 Test and 329 one-day wickets.

The 35-year-old, who is in line for a World Cup recall next March, will continue with English county Surrey for the next two months and may be recalled for the 10-nation Champions Trophy in India in October-November.

"Anil is a great bowler and will always remain in our calculations," said More. "He is a proven player, we need to test the youngsters."

Batsmen Robin Uthappa and Venugopal Rao made way for Tendulkar and Mongia from the one-day side that played in the West Indies.

"We have great faith in this team," said More. "They may have lost the one-dayers in the West Indies but most of them were close games that could have gone either way."

India, who arrive in Sri Lanka on August 10, open their tri-series campaign with a day-night match against the hosts at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on August 16.

Each team plays the other twice in the league with the top two advancing to the final on August 29.

SQUAD

Rahul Dravid (captain), Virender Sehwag (vice-captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Mohammed Kaif, Suresh Raina, Dinesh Mongia, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Harbhajan Singh, Ramesh Powar, Ajit Agarkar, Irfan Pathan, Shantakumaran Sreesanth, Munaf Patel, Rudra Pratap Singh.

Six new nat'l

FROM PAGE 21 from taking the 100m breaststroke honours in the 18-20 years group while his teammate Rabul Alam set the sixth and final new record on the day by winning the 100m backstroke.

Arifa Khatun (11-12 years) of Ansars and Kulsum Khatun (13-14 years) were double gold winners.



South African cricketers stretch prior to a practice session at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo on Thursday. The Proteas arrived in Sri Lanka on Wednesday to play two Tests and a one-day international tri-series which will also include India.

Lanka in good Mood-y



CRICINFO, undated

Tom Moody, the coach of Sri Lanka, believes his side's recent success in England was a steppingstone towards achieving greater goals in the future.

After a difficult, inconsistent six months Sri Lanka, under the inspirational Mahela Jayawardene, exceeded expectations and played with the natural flair that was traditionally their strength and Moody was quick to single out the team's journey.

"The success of the team on the tour just didn't happen, but because of a lot of hard work that was put in 12 months prior to it. Everyone's got to take credit for that," Moody told reporters.

"There's been a lot of work done by the individual players, support staff, management and senior players. As a team we gained enormous confidence and we look to improve even further in all aspects of our game."

"If we don't rest on our laurels on one good tour but continue to make that progress we had made in the past 12 months, we are in good shape. Everyone wants success but at times we all need to be patient for that success particularly when we are looking to groom the next generation of youngsters," Moody said.

"Players don't instantly turn into super stars overnight; sometimes it takes 6 months, 12 or 24 months for a player to adapt to the speed of the

game at international level in Test and one-day cricket. There's no question the talent is here in Sri Lanka."

Moody added that the most significant aspect on the tour of



TOM MOODY

England was the performance and consistency of the side.

"It started to take place after a few weeks when the team adjusted to the conditions and accepted a number of things we had to face over there," he said.

"On Saturday evening of the first Test at Lord's the reality of the situation really hit home. The group of players dug very deep and showed not only themselves but the England team and the Sri Lankan public that they had some genuine characters."

"They fought back from a hideous position to save the Test match. From that point the penny

may have dropped that we can compete in the series, that we can win over here," he said.

"The hard work that we are doing is working. Let's persevere with that hard work and believe in ourselves. The results beyond that point speak for themselves."

Sri Lanka, who had a week off following their nine-week tour, will start fitness training from Thursday in preparation for the two-Test home series against South Africa starting on July 27.

Ranatunga quits ministry for cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning captain Arjuna Ranatunga resigned as junior minister for tourism on Thursday to devote time to the island nation's cricket administration.

Officials said Ranatunga, 42, sent his letter of resignation to President Mahinda Rajapakse giving up his political office to enter Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), the main body governing the sport in the country.

"He has sent the letter of resignation to the President and will hold a media conference tomorrow (Friday) to explain his stand," an official close to Ranatunga said.

Ranatunga on Wednesday slammed the sports ministry for the delay in naming a committee to oversee cricket in the country.

The president last week, on the request of Ranatunga and other former players, ordered that elections to the deeply divided Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) be cancelled.

Rajapakse also asked sports minister Jeevan Kumaratunga to name a panel to replace the SLC's interim committee and bring in ex-players like Ranatunga to administer the sport.

The sports minister, however, put off appointing a new committee and asked the existing panel under Jayantha Dharmadasa to continue for an indefinite period.

Ranatunga, who became a cult figure here after leading Sri Lanka to victory in the 1996 World Cup, said the government was going back on its promise to constitute a new committee.

Local media said Kumaratunga had delayed naming a new panel because he wanted his own appointee Dharmadasa to continue in office.

The power struggle in the country's richest sports body rumbled on as South Africa arrived in Colombo on Wednesday to play two Tests and a limited-overs tri-series also featuring India.

Navy soccer

BSS, Khulna

BNS Dockyard emerged champions defeating BNS Shaheed Moazzam 2-0 in the final of the Annual Football Championship of Bangladesh Navy at BNS Titumir ground here yesterday.

Eight teams from different ships and establishments of Navy took part in the five-day competition.

Khastagir, ME-1 of Dockyard, was adjudged the player of the meet.

Commodore Commanding Khulna Commodore HR Bhuiyan witnessed the final as the chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners.

WI threaten to pull out of India series

PTI, Port of Spain

West Indies cricketers have threatened to pull out of the one-day series against India, scheduled to be held in Canada, after the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) "disregarded" the recent agreement signed with the West Indies Players Association (WIPA).

According to the agreement between the WICB and WIPA, the board had undertaken not to increase the number of matches without prior consultation with the players' association.

Any series in Canada would be outside the Future Tours Programme and, as such, needed the specific agreement of WIPA before any commitment was made, a report in 'Cricinfo' website said Thursday.

The series was planned during the recent ICC Annual General Meeting in London but it was reported that the deal was struck without consulting WIPA.

The details of the Canada series were still being thrashed out, but if it fails to come off then it is believed that India are looking at the possibilities of an alternative tri-series featuring West Indies and Australia somewhere in Asia.

The WIPA has also come out in support of two of their members -- Brian Lara and Dwayne Bravo -- who have been summoned by WICB officials to discuss recent problems.

"Players Association wishes to advise that it was greatly concerned about the decisions made by the Board at its meeting and in particular how these decisions affect the relationship between the WICB and WIPA..." WIPA president Dinanath Ramnarine was quoted as saying by 'Trinidad Guardian'.

Slowly but surely for Flintoff

AFP, London

Lancashire captain Mark Chilton explained how he tried to ease England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff back into competitive play during Kent's first innings of the County Championship clash at Canterbury on Wednesday.

Flintoff bowled an impressive spell on the evening of the first day, taking two Kent wickets in a fierce six-over burst, but he only bowled 13 more overs as Kent amassed 440 all out in response to Lancashire's 218.

While there are no concerns over the ankle injury that kept Flintoff out of the 5-0 one-day series defeat to Sri Lanka and the first-Test draw with Pakistan at Lord's, Chilton was still aware of the need to look after the England captain.

"Just because Fred's playing doesn't mean he's going to bowl you a truck-load of overs," Chilton said. "It's his first game back and you've got to manage him just like you'd manage anyone else."

"We tried to spread the bowling round and make sure all the seamers got a bowl. We were constantly asking him how he felt because we didn't want to over-bowl him and that was probably obvious from the side."

Chilton confirmed Flintoff was "alright but a little bit stiff" after the second day's play.

Nat'l soccer

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A total of 70 teams will take part in the knockout phase and ten teams will join two automatic qualifiers hosts Sylhet and holders Narayanganj in the 12-team finals.

Whitehouse shocks Safin



AFP, Indianapolis

Marat Safin crashed out of the ATP Indianapolis Open in spectacular style, falling in straight sets to world No. 512 Wesley Whitehouse of South Africa on Wednesday.

Safin, the two-time Grand Slam champion from Russia, held his head in his hands as he tried to explain what when wrong in a 6-1, 6-4, second-round loss to the 27-year-old journeyman, who has won only two matches this season at the ATP level.

"I never felt comfortable on the court," said Safin, a former world No. 1. "He played well, and I was never in the match."

Whitehouse, who made a charity hospital visit for the tournament a few hours before his match, called the win "the biggest of my career."

"I returned really well and put pressure on him from the beginning," he said. "That was my game plan from the start. You never know with him, he can play really well or really badly."

With the win, Whitehouse booked another big match, a third round clash with top-seeded American James Blake.

Blake, who had a first-round bye, finally earned a victory at the tournament after three first-round defeats dating to 2000, ousting

Thai Danai Udomchoke 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

Meanwhile Safin was left still seeking signs of decisive progress in the wake of a knee injury that sidelined him from last summer until February.

He dropped to 12-12 for the season, with his last victory a first-round Wimbledon win against Greg Rusedski.

"This kind of a loss hurts. I don't really know what to do. You can only look for better times. I'm not even close to my tennis," said the sad Russian.

Two more Russians advanced as Igor Kunitsyn ousted Germany's Lars Burgsmuller 7-5, 6-2 and seventh-seeded Dmitry Tursunov advanced when German Benjamin Becker quit with heat exhaustion. Tursunov led 6-3, 5-7, 2-1 when Becker called it a day.

Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan claimed a battling 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 win over Aussie Wayne Arthurs to reach the third round, the eighth seed relieved to go through in a contest which revolved entirely around serve.

The winner, who was runner-up to Andy Roddick here in 2003, fired 16 aces while big-hitting Arthurs rained down a massive 29.

"It could have gone either way," said Paradorn, who is hoping the move to US hardcourts will help him forget the agony of seven defeats in the first round on clay followed by a loss in his opening

match at Wimbledon.

"This is the start of a new season for me," he said. "I hope I can do much better than I've done so far."

The contest was so evenly matched that only one break point surfaced in the first two sets.

That opportunity in the 11th game of the second set -- produced by a double-fault from the Thai -- was quickly saved.

But Arthurs took it into a tie-breaker with an ace on set point.

"I was hoping for one good return game to break him in the third," said Paradorn, winner of five career titles, who did get the decisive break to lead 2-1. "I'm glad I didn't lose serve today, but there were certainly no rallies."

German fifth seed Tommy Haas advanced in his first match since Wimbledon as he put out Swiss veteran George Bastl 6-3, 6-3.

"Any victories are a bonus," said Haas, who added, "I'm really using these coming weeks as a buildup for the US Open."

Haas was joined in the third round by Belgian Xavier Malisse a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 winner over South Korea's Hyung-taik Lee.

Denmark's Kenneth Carlsen scored the day's lone upset as he beat sixth seed Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia 6-3, 6-2.

Tenth seed Nicolas Mahut, the lone Frenchman remaining in the field, defeated Brazilian Thiago Alves 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.



PHOTO: AFP

Paradorn Srichaphan of Thailand acknowledges the crowd's applause after his win over Wayne Arthurs of Australia in the Indianapolis Open on Wednesday.

Williams inspired by Agassi, Seles



AFP, Cincinnati

Serena Williams is taking inspiration from Andre Agassi and Monica Seles as she continues the long, hard road back to the top of women's tennis.

Injury-hit Williams, the former world number one and seven-time Grand Slam winner, played her first match in six months on Tuesday and looked like she had never been away as she brushed aside second seed Anastasia Myskina 6-2, 6-2 in the first round of the Cincinnati Open.

"I can only go up from here. I can't really go much further down," said Williams, whose six-month absence was caused by a knee injury which has seen her world ranking plummet to 139.

"I look at people like Andre Agassi and Monica Seles, and of course what they did. I was always amazed at how Monica came back after so long and did so well. I try to keep that as an inspiration. He who doubts loses."

The hardcourt matchup of Grand Slam winners was no con-

Schnyder in qtrs

AFP, Cincinnati

Patty Schnyder reached the quarterfinals of the 175,000-dollar WTA tournament here with a dominant 6-1, 6-0 victory over US qualifier Abigail Spears.

Schnyder, the top seed and defending champion, rebounded from a close call in the first round, in which she had to save a match point as she rallied to win in a third-set tiebreaker against American Lilia Osterloh.

Schnyder clearly wasn't going to cut it so close again as she advanced to a quarterfinal clash with India's Sania Mirza, a 6-1, 0-6, 6-1 winner over Finland's Emma Laine.

US veteran Amy Frazier posted a 6-3, 6-1 upset of eighth-seeded Gisela Dulko of Argentina.

She will face a countrywoman in the quarterfinals, either Serena Williams or Bethanie Mattek.

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Williams was scheduled to face Mattek, ranked 105th in the world, on Thursday night.