

Sheikh Russell football meet kicks off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Bahadur Bazar Club put five past a hapless Mission Road Sporting Club in the opening match of the Sheikh Russell Memorial Gold Cup football tournament at the Dinajpur Gor-e-Shaheed Boro Maidan yesterday.

A total of 16 teams from Dinajpur are taking part in the 10-day long meet, organised by the Dinajpur unit of Sheeha-Shebok League.

Local Awami League leader Advocate Md. Abdur Rahim was present as chief guest, while vice-president of Dinajpur Sports Association Abdus Salam and president of Dinajpur Press Club Chitta Ghosh were present as special guests during the inauguration.

The final match will be held on September 10.

'Unseen tampering possible'

CRICINFO, undated

Sanjay Manjrekar, the former Indian batsman, has said that ball-tampering can be done without being caught on any of the numerous television cameras.

"I don't agree that no ball tampering can take place with so many TV cameras focusing on the match. It's still possible," said Manjrekar during a panel discussion.

"Let's not give so much importance to TV cameras. You can have 50 cameras on the ground and still you won't be able to cover every corner of the field all the time."

Manjrekar, who is now a television commentator added that a cricketer would immediately realise with one look at a ball whether it had been tampered with.

However, he stressed that his comments should not be mixed with the ball-tampering dispute that led to the forfeiture of fourth Test between England and Pakistan at The Oval. "I don't say that had happened in the Oval match. There were two mistakes which led to the sorry ending. Number one was Hair's action. He's a fine umpire who is a bit robotic in his approach to the laws of the game. He could have handled the situation in a better way."

"The other mistake was committed by Pakistan. Inzamam should have been pulled out of the dressing-room by the administrative manager of the team and if he was still reluctant, Younis Khan, the vice-captain, should have been told to lead out the team."

Manjrekar cited the Melbourne Test between India and Australia in 1981 as an example of how the manager defused a potentially explosive situation. In that match Sunil Gavaskar thought he had incorrectly been adjudged lbw and persuaded the non-striker Chetan Chauhan to walk off with him. However, the manager Wing Commander Durani stopped Chauhan from leaving the field along with Gavaskar.

India preparing

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West Indies.

The series will be played in Kuala Lumpur from September 12-24.

India will host in October the ICC Champions Trophy, the second-biggest tournament after the World Cup featuring all the 10 Test-playing nations.

But Sehwaig said the aim was to look beyond these two tournaments.

"We are not just preparing for these events. We are preparing for the next eight months. We are training and practising keeping in mind the World Cup," said Sehwaig.

"I feel it's important to improve in all areas. If we do well in all departments of game, we will be in a better position to win. But if we concentrate on only one aspect and ignore the others, we may lose."

Juventus drop

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outside the Juve offices. "Many supporters don't understand perhaps, but those outside don't represent the majority of Juve fans," said Cobolli Gigli.

The Turin club had been ready to take their case outside of the sports authorities and appeal to TAR for a softer sentence, a move which could have seen them hit with further sanctions by the Italian federation (FIGC).

The decision not to go to TAR had been widely anticipated.

In addition to their demotion and points deduction for match-fixing in the 2004/05 season, Juve were stripped of last season's league title and the one they lifted the season before that.

They were also denied entry into the Champions league this season.

AC Milan, Fiorentina, Lazio and Reggina were also found guilty of rigging matches, but were allowed to stay in Serie A due to their lesser involvement in the scandal.



Local Awami League leader Advocate Md Abdur Rahim is introduced to the players of Bahadur Bazar Club and Mission Road Sporting Club during the inauguration ceremony of the Sheikh Russell Memorial Gold Cup football tournament at the Dinajpur Gor-e-Shaheed Boro Maidan yesterday.

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Boje, Gibbs available for India



REUTERS, Durban

South Africa batsman Herschelle Gibbs and bowler Nicky Boje have made themselves available to play in the Champions Trophy tournament in India starting next month.

Since 2000, the pair has declined to tour India over fears they may be detained in connection with police investigations into matchfixing. "Herschelle and Nicky have confirmed that they will go to India if selected and that they will cooperate fully with any interviews which the Indian police may wish to hold with them," a Cricket South Africa (CSA) release quoted chief executive Gerald Majola as saying on Friday.

"CSA will now put forward their names to the selection panel and support them in need, which we hope will assist in the investigation, in order to minimise any disruption to the team's training and playing programme."

Cole -Gallas switch

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windown. The 25-year-old Cole, who joined Arsenal as a trainee in 1998, will link up with his new club after returning from duty with England, who play Euro 2008 qualifiers against Andorra and Macedonia over the next six days.

The England defender had long been expected to leave the Gunners, following the 'tapping-up' scandal when Cole was guilty of meeting Chelsea officials in a London hotel.

Relations between Arsenal and Chelsea have been distinctly cold since then, and the player's position seemed untenable having criticised the Gunners in extracts from his soon-to-be-published book.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insisted the club would only sell if the deal was right for them - and had intimated he would have no qualms about bringing the defender back into the fold should he still be at the club come Friday morning.

Schiavone broke Sania three times to mark a complete turn around in the match. Sania had a break of her own but 14 unforced errors including three doublefaults undermined her chances.

An 80 per cent first serve in that second set showed the Italian in regal form.

In the second game of the decider, Sania had five breakpoints but could take none of it.

Second ODI today

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rule governing ball tampering, to be relaxed.

At present the on-field umpires alone are empowered to impose a five-run penalty for ball-tampering and there is no requirement on them to give the fielding side a warning in advance.

"If anyone's prepared to listen I'm prepared to chat," said Woolmer in the shadow of the pavilion at Lord's.

"Certainly Law 42.3, it's a bit autocratic. It needs to be looked at in terms of how you approach the fact that you feel the ball is being tampered with," the former England batsman added.

"If it had been treated the way they (the umpires) treat no balls - 'just come back a bit, you're getting close' - that type of thing, a bit more at ease with the players I

"Their lawyers will also be available to take appropriate steps to protect all of their rights."

The statement said the players' lawyers would accompany them to India.

Six years ago, Gibbs was fined and suspended for six months after admitting he agreed to under-perform in a one-day international against India in exchange for money.

The offer was relayed to him by then South African captain Hansie Cronje, who was subsequently banned from cricket for life.

Boje's name was mentioned in taped telephone conversations between Cronje and figures in cricket's gambling underworld, however, no further evidence has been found to implicate the spinner in the scandal.

In an interview in SA Sports Illustrated magazine, the 32-year-old Gibbs was quoted as saying the Indian police were "being hard-arsed" and had refused his offers to answer their questions on neutral ground.

Gibbs backtracked from that position in the CSA statement.

"I recognise that the police have their processes to follow and I am sorry if it has appeared that I was critical of these," the statement quoted Gibbs as saying.

"I'm now really looking forward to representing my country in India at the Champions Trophy."

The chief executive of the South African Cricketers' Association, Tony Irish, said the players' wish to play in the tournament had outweighed other considerations.

"Over the last five or six years there was uncertainty about a number of things," the statement quoted Irish as saying.

"Legal advice obtained by Herschelle and Nicky has understandably been cautious."

"I think however, that the players' great desire to play cricket in India again and to participate in this Champions Trophy has overtaken everything else."

Twice better: McGrath

CRICINFO, undated

Australia are twice the team they were when losing the Ashes last year and are ready to wrest back the urn from England, according to Glenn McGrath. McGrath, who missed the two Tests Australia conceded in 2005, believes the lessons have been learned and the players are well prepared to win the five-match contest starting on November 23.

"I look back on last year's Ashes with a lot of positive memories," he said during the team's camp in Cooloom. "You learn the most from the times you get beaten or don't play well. As a whole, the team learnt so much from that Ashes tour."

"We looked at what we needed to improve on and put that in place. Since then, I think we're twice the team we were at the start of the last Ashes."

McGrath looks at the loss as one that has generated considerable interest in world cricket and made for a compelling return bout. "If we'd have won that series convincingly the interest in world cricket - not just Australia-England but the world - would not be to the same extent," he said. "You look at this series coming up and the interest it's generated, it's the biggest thing that's happened in cricket for a long, long time."

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Chairman of selectors Kiran More has stressed India was looking to build for the future but Ganguly, who has 10,123 runs from 279 one-dayers, still nurses hopes of playing in his third World Cup next year.

If he is excluded from the Champions Trophy squad, Ganguly will have to score heavily in domestic cricket to force his way back in the team for the tour of South Africa in December.

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Aussies talk up Eng chances

BBC ONLINE, undated

Australia's top cricketers are preparing for a battle royale against England when the Ashes series starts Down Under in November.

England's recent Test series victory over Pakistan has injected fresh confidence into the side, a fact readily appreciated by the Australians.

Batsman Justin Langer said: "We are expecting them to be (even) better against us than they were last summer." Leg-spinner Shane Warne said: "If we're not at our best, they can beat us."

The series win over Pakistan ended a run of three Test series without a victory for England, but the Australia team are concentrating on the more recent results as a form guide.

Their talk is in stark contrast to the prelude of the 2005 Ashes series, when many players rubbished Michael Vaughan's team - and were made to eat their words when England won 2-1.

Warne is expecting England's injury problems to ease, adding: "There's been a lot of talk that England have had injuries but they'll have a full-strength side."

"They've got plenty of depth." Wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist, who found batting against England's Andrew Flintoff a major challenge last year, says the well-rested Lancashire all-rounder remains a major threat.

"He's obviously been a focal point of our discussion and will continue to be so such is his impact in the world stage over the last two or three years," said Gilchrist.

Vaughan will miss the whole series with injury, but the Australians are not prepared to assume anything.

"I'm expecting their captain to be Michael Vaughan. I think that's the only way I know best how to prepare," said batsman Michael Clarke.

No jackpot

BBC ONLINE, undated

Plans for a \$5m winner-takes-all match in the Caribbean have been shelved because of a scheduling conflict.

Following the recent Stanford 20/20 tournament in the region, a combined team was due to face South Africa in Antigua on 10 November.

The West Indies team, however, begins a Test in Pakistan the following day.

"To say I am disappointed is an understatement," said Allen Stanford, the billionaire who is ploughing \$28m into Caribbean cricket.

"The date for the Stanford Super Star match was approved by both the WICB (West Indies Cricket Board) and the ICC (International Cricket Council) in January 2006."

"However, we have always said that we would not do anything which conflicts with, or compromises West Indies cricket and so we have decided that it is in the best interest of everyone involved, especially the players, that we cancel the Super Star Match," he added.

Some of those not chosen for Pakistan have reacted angrily to missing out on the Super Star match as well.

Sourav hurt

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IBN news channel.

"I have just played two games in the last 12 months for India."

"Obviously when I am not a part of the team, somebody does not want you to be in the team and that could be anybody."

"It is very difficult to pinpoint any particular person because there are a whole lot of people involved in team selection."

"The captain, coach, selectors, everybody is involved so it's very difficult to pinpoint any particular person."

Chairman of selectors Kiran More has stressed India was looking to build for the future but Ganguly, who has 10,123 runs from 279 one-dayers, still nurses hopes of playing in his third World Cup next year.

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Lampard

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in the days after England's elimination, but says those feelings have now been replaced by a bullish spirit which is oozing through the camp following McClaren's appointment.

McClaren launched his era with an eye-catching 4-0 friendly win over European champions Greece and Lampard is demanding more of the same on Saturday.

"Against Greece we played with pace, ability and desire," added Lampard. "We want to repeat that against Andorra. We want to score a few goals and entertain the crowd. We know we are expected to win these next two games."

Strauss issues time alert



AFP, Cardiff

England captain Andrew Strauss has conceded that with next year's World Cup on the horizon his side does not have long left to find a winning formula in one-day cricket.

Injuries to the likes of Michael Vaughan, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles and Stephen Harmison have seen Alastair Cook, Jamie Dailrymple and Stuart Broad all handed their one-day international debuts this season.

But even before their fitness problems, England's record in one-day international cricket was poor.

They have won just four of their last 20 one-day internationals and during their current home campaign a 5-0 one-day series defeat against Sri Lanka has been booked by Twenty20 reverses against both Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

England were on course for yet another defeat, in the opening match of a five-game series against Pakistan in Cardiff on Wednesday, when rain ensured a no-result.

And with their World Cup opener in the Caribbean barely six months away, England are running out of time to find the elusive winning line-up in limited overs cricket.

"The World Cup is not that far away now and you don't want to be experimenting too close to the

World Cup," Strauss admitted.

"I think we've got a good mix between youth and experience now, which I think is important because you need that experience to go alongside the younger players - I think we've got the players, it's just a question of performing to the ability we know we have."

"We have been a little bit frustrated at the way we performed against Sri Lanka and we know that now is the time to start putting things right," added the Middlesex batsman, whose side face Pakistan in the second match of the series at his Lord's home ground on Saturday.

"Every game we play between now and then is very important and we've got four more games to go in this series and then the Champions Trophy before the real run-in to the World Cup in the West Indies."

After various flirtations with 'attacking' openers such as Matt Prior and Vikram Solanki, England have reverted to their Test match opening partnership of Strauss and Marcus Trescothick for one-day games.

In the ongoing absence of Vaughan with a knee injury, Ian Bell - who scored a career-best 88 in Cardiff before the weather intervened - has slotted in at No 3.

Although teams such as Sri Lanka, with Sanath Jayasuriya, favour an explosive start to their innings, England believe their more patient approach will ultimately

provide a solid platform which will allow dynamic middle-order batsmen Kevin Pietersen and Flintoff to go for their shots.

"We've tried a few combinations," said Strauss. "We were looking at the attacking opener at one stage and we've tried a couple of people in that role and that didn't quite work out for us."

"Maybe we have just gone back to trying to get more of an assured start and setting a platform for the middle-order players."

"Marcus has played that attacking role at the top of the order for a number of years now and done very well and it is not as if the other players at the top of the order can't hit boundaries, but wickets in hand are very, very important in one-day cricket."

He added: "When you have got players like Pietersen and Flintoff in your middle order when he is back you can afford maybe to take a little bit more time at the start."

"That's the theory and when we have played well it has worked exceptionally well and I still believe if we do play to that gameplan and play well we can beat any side in the world."



AP, New York

Vania King hoped fans would hear from her at the US Open. They did, on and off the court.

Playing at Louis Armstrong Stadium, the American teen made several nice shots Thursday afternoon despite losing to second-seeded Justine Henin-Hardenne 6-1, 6-2.

Already a tennis pro at 17, the aspiring singer then moved over to Arthur Ashe Stadium hours later and performed "America the Beautiful" before the night matches.

"Walking out there tonight, it really hit me and I got very nervous," she said after her daily double. "I think it went OK."

Standing behind the baseline in a long brown dress, arms at her sides, King closed her eyes as she hit her early notes.

"That helped me calm down," she said. "After that, I could just sing."

King, from Long Beach, Calif., came into the US Open with a career-high ranking of 70th. She beat Alicia Molik in the first round.

King is a year ahead of her high school class, and has been accepted at Stanford. She'll pass up a chance to join her sisters in college -- one goes to Princeton, the other to Penn -- and keep competing in tennis.

And, she'll continue to sing. She's recorded four songs in a studio, with a bent toward Broadway, and likes a selection from "Wicked."

King said she did not consider the performance her New York audition.

"I'm not expecting anything

OPEN SECRETS

from this. Not an agent or anything," she said. "I usually sing for myself."

King said she'd never sung the national anthem or any other song at a major sports event. Asked how she got this opportunity, she smiled.

"My mom," she said. "At the Fed Cup, she was going around telling everybody that I sing."

King gave a good account of herself against Henin-Hardenne, adding, "I made her play a lot of balls."

While she kept her composure against a top opponent, the prospect of facing of crowd of New York critics was a bit more daunting. She spent the time in-between fixing her hair and makeup; her mom had picked out the dress.

COMPETITIVE DRIVE

Lleyton Hewitt found out firsthand what a lot of New York commuters already knew: The city's traffic can be terrible.

The 2001 US Open champion got stuck on his way to Thursday's second-round match, and his pre-match practice time was cut in half. The 15th-seeded Australian had little trouble, though, in posting a 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 win over Jan Hernych.

"We had to end up going a totally different way that I'd never been before," Hewitt said. "I got to see a bit more of New York than I probably would have liked to this morning."

Hewitt said his coach, Roger Rasheed, decided to give officers a hand around the Midtown Tunnel leading out of Manhattan.

"He was directing traffic for a bit of it," Hewitt said. "We were at

a standstill for 40 minutes. I think. He had to tell the police at the front that there's such a backup of cars that someone had to do something."

Hewitt said his injured knee was holding up OK.

"I'm not feeling 100 per cent out there at the moment," he said. "It's a bit of a psychological battle, as well."

Hewitt will play Novak Djokovic of Serbia in the third round.

QUIET, PLEASE!

In Lindsay Davenport's opinion, what happens in the tennis locker rooms should stay there.

The former US Open champion hasn't read journeyman Vince Spadea's new tell-all book, "Break Point," but said, "I heard that some players were upset."

Davenport said there's a code among players about tattling that shouldn't be broken.

"It's kind of an unwritten rule," she said. "I don't feel like it's secrets and stuff, but you have a mutual respect for all your fellow competitors."

"Even if someone were to ask me, 'Oh, what do you think of this player?'" she said, "I'm always like, 'Oh, they're good.' It's kind of nobody's business."

Davenport also said the women's locker room is not a prime place to gather intriguing material for a gossipy book.