



Did U Know?

The Major League Baseball teams use about 850,000 balls per season.



Ricky Ponting

(Australia cricket captain)
"Having had the opportunity to sleep on the incident, I know I made a serious error of judgement. I regret the approach I made to umpire Asad Rauf and realise I shouldn't have behaved in the way I did."
While repenting his confrontation with the umpire over a wide delivery in their one-day match against the West Indies in Kuala Lumpur.

Wild calls Tigers

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Taking a group of highly paid, celebrated national heroes to the wilderness and making them fend for themselves must be one of the boldest new endeavors in cricket.

Come next season, get ready to see the Tigers sweating it out while climbing one of the hills at Rangamati or even trudging on the sandy beaches of Cox's Bazar, taking the lead from recent camps of this sort carried out by India and Australia.

You might have to brace yourself to see our boy next-door Mohammad Ashraf in military attire with his face smeared in war paint. In today's cricket, one has to be ready for anything and everything.

Monotony is the word that comes to mind when one thinks about your average training routine. Of course it is necessary for the players to spend their time in the nets but running in laps round a stadium can slowly turn players off. The outlook of the players, in that instance, has the tendency to become stiff.

Sometimes for a change, the regular professional cricketer (with fitness in mind) would go for road running but given their status, the Tigers would be better off not indulging in it. Rather, coach Dav Whatmore agrees that the Tigers, given enough time, could actually take part in such activities.

"We could have done this (cross-training) but it requires some long-term planning and time in hand. If we had a long off-season it could have been possible, but we will certainly do this in the near

future," said Whatmore yesterday while giving individual attention to batsman Aftab Ahmed at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium indoor facilities ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy in India next month.

But the Bangladesh coach also added that he had no qualms about the level of facilities, in terms of human resources, present in his disposal.

"The players are exposed to contemporary and up-to-date coaching facilities, as far as the coaching staff are concerned," explained Whatmore.

"I have a highly qualified charge at my disposal with one of them doing Masters in his discipline. We don't have enough development when it comes to sports science but whatever we have, is good enough."

The Indian coaching staff, though, must have taken their inspiration from the French football team, which went on a few days of intense training program in the Alps before this year's FIFA World Cup.

For three days back in July this year, India's superstars -- from the legend Sachin Tendulkar to the star-in-waiting Mahendra Singh Dhoni -- were kept in a defence establishment outside Bangalore to participate in military drills such as crawling, climbing and that too by living inside tents without any luxury.

Frankly, such a venture was unlikely even a few years ago but with more emphasis being put on team spirit, especially in team sports like cricket and football, the boot camp, as the Australians would call it, is now a reality.

The Australians in fact, amazingly, followed suit. Coach John Buchanan took the best in the world

to the famous Australian outback and pictures showed that the likes of Shane Warne, Michael Clarke were walking miles while carrying jerrycans of water as well as pushing broken-down vehicles in military attire just like the Indians had done.

The players, interestingly, had to be fully insured as it was deemed dangerous.

"I am so glad that we did it before Australia because if they had done it before us, then they would have said we are just copying Australia," said Indian captain Rahul Dravid in a recent interview.

A small victory, or just a dig at the invincible Aussies, but whoever did it first, Australia or India, the idea has opened up a new avenue for cricket training, in terms of the mental aspect.

"If you keep following the same routine, sometimes it does get stale. You just provide them with a different challenge for the same set of benefits," admitted Dravid.

"If you are trying physical training, one day you might run around the ground, but if you do that every day you know it will become boring."

Bangladesh could actually add more light into this area with its rich ecological and natural diversities. Maybe the Tigers could bring some newer innovation into training systems that others could follow.

There was one instance in the 1970s when the Bangladesh team, before their matches against the visiting MCC cricket team, actually went on a weeklong camp at a Navy installation.

So there is no short of inspiration (and no room for excuses) for the Tigers now, it seems.



LET'S HAVE INDOORS AGAIN: Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore is having a mini conference with his boys inside the indoor facilities at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium after rain spoiled a planned net session.

Ex-serviceman new Tigers manager

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) turned back to a former armed forces official to take care of the national cricket team when it announced flight lieutenant (ret'd) Mohammed Harunoor Rashid Bhuiyan as the team operations manager yesterday.

After col (ret'd) MA Latif Khan's tenure as national team manager for over two years (2003-2005), the BCB had put the duty on different ex-national cricketers for the home series and the African trip.

Harunoor has 18 years of experience at senior management level for the Bangladesh Air Force and the BKSP. An assistant director of the BKSP, he also acted as manager of the BKSP cricket team.

The new manager will get his first tour when the Tigers participate in the ICC Champions Trophy in India next month but his job beyond that would be ensured if he successfully completes the three-month probationary period, mandatory for all BCB appointments.

Speed up China

Cricket

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Malcolm Speed is heading to China next week, excited at the prospects for the game in a country where interest is growing rapidly.

It will be Speed's first visit to the world's most populous country. He will be accompanied by Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan who has been appointed to chair a "Committee to Evaluate China."

"This is my first visit to China as chief executive officer of the International Cricket Council and it is an exciting prospect both personally and professionally," said Speed.

"I was given an insight into the China Cricket Associations plans during an Asian Cricket Council seminar in Kuala Lumpur in June and although those plans are still in their early stages they are still very impressive."

"No one is under any illusions that the widespread development of

the game in China will be something that takes place overnight.

"However, the enthusiasm for the game in China appears to be both tangible and growing rapidly and if that enthusiasm can be harnessed then that is great news for cricket not only there but on a world-wide basis."

China joined the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in 2004 and the ICC in 2005 and authorities there have drawn up a comprehensive development plan with coaching, funding and facilities in place to fast-track the one-day game.

Shaharyar said he had already met with Chinese officials and was impressed by what he had heard.

"I have been impressed by the rigour and the scale of their strategic thinking," he said.

"The opportunities they potentially offer their countrymen is immense, the potential they offer the cricket world is immense."

They will be in Beijing and Shanghai for five days, assessing the standard of play, coaching and facilities established so far and meeting Beijing Olympic Games Organising Committee vice-chairman Zhang

Xiaoning among others.

"We think this is a sport in which Chinese could do very well because this is a game that emphasizes skills, tactics and team work," said Zhang, who is also chairman of the Chinese Cricket Association.

The association's goal is to have 15,000 cricketers by 2009. These numbers are forecast to rise to 60,000 by 2012 and 150,000 by 2020.

ACC chief executive Syed Ashraf ul Huq has been instrumental in pushing the boundaries in China, and said when China wanted to do something, it succeeded.

"That China tends to reach its sporting goals cannot be doubted," he said.

"Malcolm Speed and Shaharyar Khan are going to China to see for themselves the reality of what China has achieved."

"All the world's cricketing bodies can benefit from the presence of a country with the talent, will and determination to be a cricketing force."

"Cricket suits China. China could be a perfect match for cricket."



PHOTO: AFP

FOR THE 40TH TIME: Indian star batsman Sachin Tendulkar spreads his arms after completing a sublime century against the West Indies in his comeback match during the second one-day international of the triangular series at Kinrara Oval in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Sachin back with huge bang

West Indies victors on D-L method

Cricket

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Sachin Tendulkar smashed a masterly 141 on his comeback from injury Thursday but it was to no avail as the West Indies beat India in a rain-affected DLF Cup one-day international here.

The West Indies won by 29 runs

on the Duckworth-Lewis (D-L) method after scoring 141-2 in 20 overs as they chased India's 309-5 when the weather settled matters.

India were 112-2 at the same stage, giving victory to the West Indies.

Ramnaresh Sarwan was not out 37 and Brian Lara not out 27. Openers Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Chris Gayle had earlier gone for 6 and 45 respectively.

It was an inglorious end to Tendulkar's first full match since shoulder surgery sidelined him in March.

The 33-year-old hit 13 fours and five sixes, carrying his bat for only the second time in his 364 limited overs internationals.

He was supported by Irfan Pathan, who whacked a quick-fire 64.

Tendulkar, arguably the best batsman in history with a world record 35 Test and now 40 one-day centuries, proved he has fully recovered and lost none of his winning instincts in a major boost for India ahead of the Champions Trophy.

"It was a very special 100. It was made on a difficult track and I am very happy with it. Everything clicked," he said.

"I'm feeling absolutely fine and very happy to last 50 overs and still be running. It is a reflection of what I have been doing the past few months."

With his elbow strapped in a

blue brace, he started nervously and wicketkeeper Carlton Baugh spilled a catch when he was on five.

But from there on Tendulkar got a grip, going for his strokes and signalling his intentions by lofting a short ball from Dwayne Smith over the square leg fence for six.

He brought up his 50 with a four through fine leg and notched his ton with a single, hoisting his arms in the air and looking to the heavens.

Lara paid tribute to Tendulkar, as well as his team for getting a win under their belts.

"You just had to watch and appreciate it. It was a very special innings," he said.

"For us, the win will give our middle order batsmen a lot of confidence moving forward."

India had been itching to get going since South Africa's pullout and torrential rain ruined their triangular series in Sri Lanka last month.

With the Champions Trophy firmly in their back of their minds, they selected their strongest team for the match, preferring not to experiment as Australia did in their 78-run victory over the West Indies on Tuesday.

Tendulkar opened alongside captain Rahul Dravid, who won the toss and opted to bat. Dravid looked in fine fettle until Dwayne Smith trapped him leg before for 26.

A 20-minute rain delay when the score was 79-1 failed to break Tendulkar's focus and he hooked up with Pathan to keep the scoreboard ticking over as thunder rumbled overhead and lightning flashed around the ground.

He remained at the crease as first Dravid and Pathan, then Virender Sehwag (9), MS Dhoni (2), and Suresh Raina (34) fell.

Jerome Taylor was the pick of the wayward West Indian bowlers with 3-64. Dwayne Smith and Chris Gayle both got one wicket each.

The West Indies needed something special from their batsmen but the omens didn't look good when Chanderpaul top-edged a RP Singh delivery to deep fine leg where Munaf Patel caught him for six.

But opener Gayle was on fire, scoring nine fours in his 45 before thick-edging a Patel ball to wicketkeeper M.S. Dhoni.

It brought captain Lara to the crease and he set about the Indian attack with gusto, accompanied by Sarwan as they furiously chased the big total before the rain came pouring down.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the DLF Cup day-night one-day international between India and the West Indies at the Kinrara Oval in Kuala Lumpur.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1



ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports
South Africa v Zimbabwe
First one-day international
Live at 6:30 pm

TEN Sports
Men's Hockey World Cup
Australia v South Korea
First semifinal
Live at 9:15 pm

Germany v Spain
Second semifinal
Live at 11:45 pm

8x4