



Did U Know?

The first ICC Champions Trophy was held in Bangladesh, 1998.



Frank Rijkaard
(Barcelona coach)
"He is a fundamental player for us but he isn't a robot. Sometimes we forget he is human."
On Ronaldinho.

What to WATCH

BTV & SET Max

ICC Champions Trophy
Bangladesh v Sri Lanka
Live at 2:45 pm

Yousuf hopes for less chaos

AFP, Lahore

New Pakistan captain Mohammad Yousuf vowed Friday that his side's chances in the upcoming Champions Trophy will not be affected by Younis Khan's controversial refusal to lead the team.

Younis shocked Pakistan on Thursday when he suddenly stepped down as stand-in skipper for the banned Inzamam-ul-Haq, saying that he did not want to be a "dummy captain".

"The team is united and Younis's stepping down will not harm our chances in the Champions Trophy," Yousuf told reporters.

He promised Pakistan, who won the world cup in 1992, would be competitive in the tournament, for which Pakistan fly to India on Saturday.

"We have a balanced side and know what challenge lies ahead in the Trophy and we will be equal to it," Yousuf said.

The Pakistan Cricket Board appointed Yousuf as captain late Thursday, hours after Younis turned down the job.

Younis was named only last week to replace Inzamam, who received a ban of four one-day internationals for leading his team's refusal to play in the Fourth Test against England at the Oval in August.

However the International Cricket Council cleared Inzamam of ball tampering, the charge initially levelled by umpires Darrell Hair and Billy Doctrove that led to Pakistan's protest.

The stylish 32-year-old batsman Yousuf has led Pakistan in four one-day matches, winning and losing two each, while his three Tests as captain ended in one win and two defeats.

He converted from Christianity to Islam last year and changed his name from Yousuf Youhana. He attributes his recent blistering form for Pakistan to the switch.

Pakistan open the Trophy with a match against a qualifier team in Jaipur on October 17 before taking on New Zealand (October 25) and South Africa (October 27), both at Mohali.

Doctrove knew it beforehand

BBC ONLINE, undated

Umpire Billy Doctrove has no complaints about being left off the list of match officials for the ICC Champions Trophy, which starts in India on Saturday.

Doctrove and Darrell Hair were the two umpires at the centre of controversy during the recent Oval Test between England and Pakistan.

Tigers eyeing an upset



BISHWAJIT ROY from Mohali

The presence of champion off-spinner Muralidaran and consistent left-arm paceman Chaminda Vaas seems to have instilled more spirit into the Tigers as they look to make a winning start in the ICC Champions Trophy at Mohali and at the same time secure their second-ever win against Sri Lanka.

There is talk of the Tiger's chances against West Indies and lowly Zimbabwe to make a dream entry into the tournament proper but captain Habibul Bashar was not ready to go into the first match with a losing mentality against the former world champions.

"In February, we proved that we could beat Sri Lanka. If we could do it in Bogra, then why not here?" said a confident Bashar while speaking with the press at an official briefing yesterday.

"I honestly believe that we have the ability to win a one-day match against any team on the given day." Bangladesh clinched their first

limited-over victory over Sri Lanka earlier this year at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra but their four-wicket success came against a Lankan side that missed two of their premier players in Muralidaran and Vaas.

"They are vital players for their side but one must also consider that Sri Lanka are still a strong side without them. We have the experience to play both of them. So I think it is not a fear factor for us. I have a doubt about Murali's success in grassy wickets," explained Bashar.

Putting aside their opponents' strengths, the 33-year old skipper however, said that his team were motivated by their practice match success against PCA XI at Chandigarh Stadium last Wednesday.

"I think we can take inspiration from our win in the practice match because we have played the match as a unit, something that is most important to be successful. The team is in a very good mood and are ready to play with a positive frame of mind in the competition," said Bashar.

"Yes, Sri Lankans are now in a good form and they have some special players in their arsenal but in one-day cricket, as you all know, anything can happen. If we can play to our potential, then it would not be

an impossible task to beat Sri Lanka again," he added.

Bashar was also not worried about the much talked about dew factor which comes into play in day-night matches.

"I don't think that the dew would worry us much, even though we are playing a day-night match after almost a year. We didn't face any dew last night till 8pm. It will go out of play for the team batting second, if they see off the first few overs safely," he explained.

The Tigers' think-tank included right-arm paceman Shahadat Hossain in the 12-man team but there is hardly any chance to pick four seamers.

And if it happens, the axe will fall on left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak. Bashar's counterpart Mahela Jayawardene said they had no chance to take Bangladesh lightly as they had the experience of swallowing a defeat during the series in February.

"Bangladesh have been playing international cricket consistently for the last five or six years, so they have enough knowledge about the game. There is no scope to take any opponents lightly in one-day

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



CLASS IN SESSION: Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore (R) passes instruction to his players during a training session at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium, on the eve of their Champions Trophy match against Sri Lanka, in Mohali on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

CCL begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Akram Khan's Beximco Group will start defence of their Grameen-Phone Corporate Cricket League (CCL) title today when they take on newcomers Chittagong Port Authority in the inaugural match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Mohammed Rezaul Karim will declare the fourth edition of the tournament open at 8.45am.

Two more venues - Fatullah Stadium in Narayanganj and BKSP in Savar - will be used for the 12-team curtain raiser of the 2006-07 season which will miss the on-duty

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

Hasina beside shooters

SPORTS REPORTER

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited the injured shooters and employees of the National Shooting Federation at the Metropolitan Hospital.

Condemning Monday's barbaric attack on Commonwealth Games gold medalist Asif Hossain Khan and fellow shooters Shoebuzzaman and Ali Hossain Shipu, cook Jahangir and Ansar member Zannatul Ferdous at the National Shooting Complex, Hasina criticised the law-enforcing agency for putting sportsmen's life at risk.

"We have to protect people like Asif who has won us laurel from abroad. Sportsmen uphold the image of the country to the world and but the police have tortured them too. It's a disgrace," she told reporters after spending time with each of the injured.

Hasina also gave Tk one lakh for the treatment of the five.

It was also learned that young shooter Shipu will need an operation on a broken finger and the hospital authority has suggested him to contact a surgeon.

The shooters have decided to go for one hour's 'token strike' from risk.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina (R) consoles injured shooter Asif Hossain Khan (C) during a visit to the Metropolitan Hospital to check on the condition of the wounded sportsmen yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Freddie inspired by injury



AFP, London

Andrew Flintoff insists his lengthy injury lay-off has given him the perfect motivation to lead England to Champions Trophy and Ashes glory.

England captain Flintoff and his one-day squad flew out to India on Friday ahead of their first match in the bi-annual one-day tournament against the hosts in Jaipur on October 15.

After competing in India, England will travel to Australia to defend the Ashes crown they won last year after a 16-year wait.

And the Lancashire all-rounder believes that missing most of the season with an ankle injury has only increased his appetite to make the most of his match-winning talents

during a gruelling few months that will climax with the World Cup in the West Indies next year.

Flintoff said: "I've had time away from the game this season and one of the things that is motivating me is I've done all the gym work and now I'm hungry to play cricket."

"I want to get back on the pitch and play. When you are not playing you actually realise what it means to you and how much you do miss it."

"Sometimes when you are playing all the time you take it a bit for granted."

"A forced break has made me realise what it means to me and how much I want to get back out there and play."

Halfway through this season Andrew Strauss took over the captain's job from Flintoff, who had already replaced the injured Michael Vaughan, when the England star's long-standing ankle problem flared up again.

He had surgery to finally cure the injury and, although Strauss led

England to a Test series win against Pakistan and also rallied the side to share the one-day series, Flintoff was handed the captaincy for the up-coming tours.

But Flintoff is happy to take advice from Strauss and has no doubts they can work well together.

He said: "I've seen Strauss a couple of times over the last week or so and spoken to him about it."

"There was a lot made of it in the media about competition for the job but that was never the case with the two of us."

"It was something which was out of our control. We couldn't influence the decision."

"Which ever way it went, I know Strauss and he will give 100 per cent. He'll be someone that I will lean on from time to time, and if he

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Usha, Abahani in action on opening day

PREMIER HOCKEY FROM TODAY

SPORTS REPORTER

Usha Krira Chakra and Abahani will look forward to bury their failure in the Club Cup tournament when they start their Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League campaign today.

Holders Usha, who were eliminated by eventual champions Mohammedan Sporting Club in the Club Cup semifinals, will take on newcomers Bangladesh Sporting Club in the opening match of the league at 1.30pm at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Abahani, two days after their 2-1 loss to archrivals Mohammedan in the Club up final, meet Sonali Bank in the day's second match at 3pm.

Both Abahani and Sonali Bank are expected to field foreign players. Abahani will rely on old guard Ronald Kiran of India, who was due to arrive in the capital last night, while the bankers have recruited Indian duo Santinder Singh and Gurinder Singh.

Usha will start without any foreign players but they are expected to bring three Pakistani internationals in addition of a coach.

In absence of Bangladesh Railway, only nine teams will compete in this year's league, which is being held after one season.

The teams: Usha Krira Chakra, Abahani, Mohammedan Sporting Club, Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, Ajax Sporting Club, Sadharan Bima, Sonali Bank, Bangladesh Sporting Club and Azad Sporting Club.

CRICKET TALENT HUNT Sixteen obtain scholarship

SPORTS REPORTER

Sixteen cricketers will be provided with playing kits and educational facilities after they were chosen among 30 others in the Pink City 'Cricket Medhar Khoje' talent hunt programme.

The names of the 16 selected players were announced yesterday in a simple ceremony at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

Eight batsmen, six bowlers and a couple of wicketkeepers were given the scholarship.

It began across the country back in May in as many as 20 venues with the participation of 14,000 young cricketers.

Pink City general manager NI Maksud, RF Properties Limited managing director Kamrul Hasan and former manager of the national cricket team Col (ret'd) MA Latif Khan handed over crests and certificates to the selected players, while five former Bangladesh captains -- Raquibul Hasan, Gazi Ashraf Hossain, Aminul Islam Bulbul, Akram Khan and Naimur Rahman -- gave away cricket bats to the selected players.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) game development committee chairman Khondoker Jamiluddin, who was present on the occasion declared that the final phase 30 players will be later included in BCB's different age-level camp.

"These players are going to participate in the national championship this month and some first

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Opener Ash here to stay



SPORTS REPORTER from Mohali

Ace batsman Mohammad Ashraful will be given some time to settle in the opening position, the eternal headache of the Tigers.

Opening the innings is not new to the struggling right-hander as he was given the responsibility on several occasions, but never proved his worth in this position.

After a long break, he was promoted to the opening slot in the last match against Kenya in August with left-handed Shahriar Nafees and continued to do so in both the practice games. The fact is he simply fired blank.

Captain Habibul Bashar, though, was not frustrated with his effort in the opening position. To a certain extent, he believes that Ashraful can

be a good opener if he gets enough time.

"Yes, Ashraful will open the innings with Shahriar Nafees because we think that they need more time to be a good pair. I am not frustrated with Ashraful's performance as an opener. He might have failed to make a big score in the practice match against PCA XI but he looked very focussed in his position which is encouraging," said the skipper.

Ashraful stated that he was ready to establish himself as a permanent opener in the one-day game.

"I want to be a good opener, and not a mere pinch-hitter. I think a batsman can bat at any position if he has the quality. I think everything will be okay if I can play a good innings as an opener," said Ashraful.

"The team management had a session with me and they gave me the idea about what is my responsibility as an opener. I think as an opener, a batsman has a great chance to settle down and play a big

innings. I am not worried with my bad form because I know it is just a matter of time to get back," he added.

He was excited with the fact that he is going to play against Sri Lanka, against whom he has a good track record.

"These sort of wickets are good for playing shots as there will be good bounce," he said.

"I always love to play against Sri Lanka. I have some good innings against them. If I can survive the first few overs, then I can make a big one this time," said the man who boasts two Test hundreds and four ODI half-centuries against the Lankans.

"I need just a good innings to get back my confidence and I think the stage is set for me to do that. If I can do here in this big tournament, then the impact will be immense," he added.

A time to win: Punter



AFP, Brisbane

Australia have yet to win the ICC Champions Trophy but skipper Ricky Ponting believes this may be their year.

Australia have won three World Cups but have been knocked out of the Champions Trophy in the last two semifinals.

"I'm confident we've got a talented and confident squad going into this competition who really want to win it," Ponting said at the airport here Friday prior to the team's departure for India.

"We've tended to have good success in one day cricket in India over the years and we know the kind of conditions to expect so we're not thinking about obstacles, we're concentrating on executing our plans each match."

Ponting is expecting tough competition for the title from South Africa and from the sub-continent sides.

"Sri Lanka will be competitive in India and you can't discount the home team on home soil," he said. "Pakistan also have a good one day

day record."

The Australians, nominal favourites for a hat-trick of World Cup victories in the Caribbean next March and April, have prepared for the Champions Trophy by winning a tri-series against the West Indies and India in Malaysia last month.

Ponting's team tuned up for the world's second biggest one-day tournament with a crushing 127-run victory over the West Indies in the final of the DLF Cup in Kuala Lumpur on September 25.

The tri-series was Australia's first competitive cricket since whitewashing Bangladesh in three ODIs last April.

Ponting believes veteran fast bowler Glenn McGrath will continue to improve during the ICC

Champions Trophy.

McGrath returned to the national side last month after taking time off from January this year to support his wife, Jane, in her battle with breast cancer.

McGrath, 37, recorded modest returns of 1-73 during the DLF tournament in Malaysia but Ponting believes he is getting better.

"He bowled steadily and within himself in Kuala Lumpur and knew after that that he wanted to get more overs under his belt, which is why you saw him play club cricket last weekend," Ponting said.

"He'll get the chance to bowl for a month in India, which is good."

"I thought his comeback in KL was pretty good and I expect him to keep improving as we move through the next month."

Australia's opening match in the Champions Trophy is on October 18 in Mumbai against a qualifying team.



Former cricket captains (from L) Akram Khan, Gazi Ashraf Hossain, Raquibul Hasan, Aminul Islam Bulbul and Naimur Rahman Durjoy hand over cricket bats to the 16 selected cricketers of the Pink City 'Cricket Medhar Khoje' programme at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR