

New hopes for American cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The USA Cricket Association executive meeting in Florida on Saturday is set to unveil an ambitious new partnership with an international sports marketing company.

The USACA is likely to enter into a joint venture with the company, and this body will be responsible for a number of aspects of cricket in the USA.

Cricinfo understands the proposal is for a complete and comprehensive development of all commercial aspects of the sports and not just a replacement of the abandoned Project USA program. It is a more comprehensive A-Z program for the development of the sport in the USA from grass roots up.

Programs for the overall commercial development of the sport are also being put in place as well as database management programs that will assist with player registration and high level athlete identification. This will allow the governance of the sport to be run by USACA with the business and commercial side run by professional experienced sports marketing people, with USACA officials on the board of the joint venture company.

It is reported that Gladstone Dainty, the USACA president, has been negotiating with the company and that he will present recommendations to the board.

If the deal goes ahead, then it is likely to mean that international matches should be hosted in the USA as early as 2008. Three likely locations have been identified - Florida, New York and Los Angeles - and a local expert said he believed these could be ready for use with temporary seating for up to 40,000 spectators by early 2008.

The USACA will need to overcome one other obstacle. It is widely thought that Dainty entered into a deal with a businessman named Kal Patel in 2005 in which Patel acquired the rights to stage international games in the USA. Repeated requests by Cricinfo for clarification have been ignored, but the Patel situation will need to be addressed.

4 MSC hockey

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disciplinary committee. Mohammedan player Shamim Reza was fined Tk 10,000 and suspended for four matches while three others - Yamin Hossain, Mamunur Rahman and Sharafat Miah - were all fined Tk 5,000 each and received a caution.

The players have been asked to deposit the money to the federation before their next club match in the ongoing Premier Division Hockey League.

Low-key start

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players like Sanath Jayasuriya and Muthiah Muralidaran.

Bangladeshi players however have been enjoying the situation as they could make their shopping uninterrupted and visit anywhere without any hesitation.

"This is fine that we can go all the places without any hesitation which is not possible in our country. So it is fantastic for us," said wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud.

Zidane amongst

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(Cameroon), Thierry Henry (France), Miroslav Klose (Germany), Lionel Messi (Argentina), Arjen Robben (Holland), Ronaldinho (Brazil), Ronaldo (Brazil), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Wayne Rooney (England), Andriy Shevchenko (Ukraine), Luca Toni (Italy), Fernando Torres (Spain).

Zim await Lara

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Indies routed Zimbabwe 5-0 and stunned India 4-1 at home, before edging out the Indians to reach the Malaysian tri-series final last month.

"It will be a huge World Cup at home, but before that we must win and take confidence from every match we play, starting with the Champions Trophy," he said.

Lara also warned team-mates against taking Zimbabwe lightly, saying he "liked what I saw of them in the West Indies earlier this year."

"They have gone through a bad phase, but the side is young and eager to play," he said. "I have no doubt they will be competitive and are capable of causing an upset."

TEAMS

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chandepaul, Runako Morton, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Carlton Baugh, Corey Collymore, Fidel Edwards, Ian Bradshaw, Jerome Taylor, Marlon Samuels, Wavell Hinds.

ZIMBABWE (from): Prosper Utseya (captain), Stuart Matsikenyeri, Brendan Taylor, Tafadzwa Mufambisi, Elton Chigumbura, Hamilton Masakadza, Terry Duffin, Tawanda Mupariwa, Ed Rainsford, Piet Rinke, Anthony Ireland, Gregory Strydom, Justice Chibhabha, Tafadzwa Kamungozi.

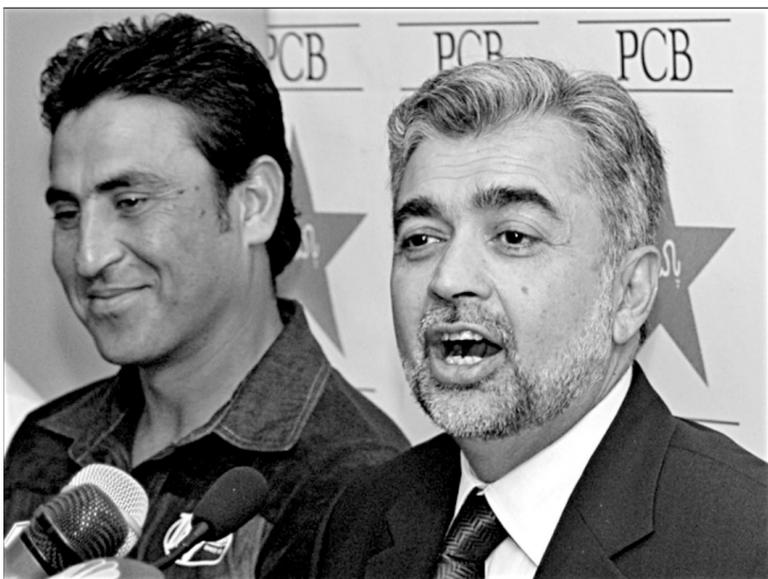


PHOTO: AFP

Newly-appointed Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Nasim Ashraf (R) talks to media while Younis Khan, who dramatically returned to national captaincy, smiles in Lahore yesterday.

Shaharyar quit over captaincy row

Nasim appointed new PCB chairman



AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan resigned Friday over batsman Younis Khan's refusal to captain the national team and The Oval Test fiasco, officials said.

"Yes, I am hurt because of the recent events like The Oval Test and Younis Khan fiascos," Shaharyar, a former diplomat, told AFP.

"I thought this is the right time to step down and pass the responsibility to someone else. The Younis Khan episode has hurt me more than The Oval fiasco," said Shaharyar who had headed the PCB since December 2003.

Younis dramatically refused to captain the side in the Champions Trophy in India next week, after he was appointed to replace Inzamamul Haq, who was banned for four matches for bringing the game into disrepute during the Test in August.

Inzamam and his team refused

to return to the field in protest over allegations of ball tampering in the Test against England.

On Thursday, Younis stunned media when he walked off from a press conference, saying he did not want to be a 'dummy' captain.

The PCB subsequently appointed batsman Mohammad Yousof as captain.

Officials said Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf had appointed Dr Nasim Ashraf as the new chairman of the cricket board.

Meanwhile, coach Bob Woolmer hit back at speculation that the Pakistan team is on the verge of imploding on the eve of the Champions Trophy.

"Any talk of a change in captaincy is pure speculation. The chairman had an excellent meeting with Mohammad Yousof and the players and it isn't likely that anything will change," Woolmer told www.cricinfo.com.

Woolmer, in charge since June 2004, was appointed by Shaharyar. "He's done a wonderful job for Pakistan. Without any argument, he

is the best chairman, CEO or head of board that I have worked with in my 20 years as a coach."

Woolmer also suggested that Shaharyar's age - he is 72 - had played a part in the decision.

"I think he handled the Inzamam affair and the Younis affair brilliantly and it is very sad to lose such a fantastic and wise counsel. I think he thought that he didn't need this sort of aggravation at this stage in his life and that is fair enough. He is a great loss to Pakistan cricket."

But Woolmer was adamant that Pakistan cricket would move forward. "Good things are happening in Pakistan cricket despite recent events," said the coach.

"Dr Ashraf is a good man and will steer the ship on its course. I will continue to prepare the team for upcoming assignments and it is important to build on the stable platform we have created over the last two years."

Younis expects success



AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan skipper Younis Khan said Saturday his team enjoys playing under pressure and that he hoped to lead his players to success in the Champions Trophy.

"We have always performed well under pressure and I am hoping we will fight until the last ball in the tournament," said Younis, who was reinstated at the helm after having initially declined captaincy earlier this week.

"The past is gone and I don't want to be remembered in a negative way," said Younis, who had earlier declared that he did not want to be a "dummy captain", forcing selectors to name Mohammad Yousof as the skipper.

But Younis said he was comfortable being captain again and was looking forward to lead from the front.

"We have played well as a team over the past two years and I don't see a reason why we can't do it in this tournament, which is nothing

less than a World Cup," said the 28-year-old.

"I am always proud to play for my country and hope we can make it to the final here. We have a balanced side even though we will miss Inzamamul Haq," said Younis, who has scored 3,756 runs in 139 one-dayers.

Regular captain Inzamam is serving a four-match ban after being found guilty of bringing the game into disrepute over his side's refusal to play during the fourth Test against England in August.

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer too was confident his team would come out and perform well despite the goings-on off the ground.

"It has been a dreadful month and a half and everything will be kept recorded in my brain for a long time to come," said Woolmer, who played 19 Tests and six one-dayers for England, most of them in the 1970s.

"You can either crumble or use them (such situations) to strengthen team spirit," said Woolmer. "We are here to play positive cricket and want to leave our baggage behind."

"We have a talented side, Younis and Yousof have a great understanding and there is no problem in the team," added Woolmer, who had

coached South Africa with success in the 1990s.

Pakistan play their first match against one of the two qualifiers in Jaipur on October 17.

The qualifying tournament got under way on Saturday with a match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Mohali.

The West Indies and Zimbabwe are the other teams fighting it out for two berths in the main tournament which starts on October 15.

Basten plays

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"But we will see tomorrow on the field who is a favourite and who is not. I will be happy with a draw."

The Bulgarians have drawn 2-2 with Romania and beaten Slovenia 3-0 in their two matches so far and with four points are breathing down the necks of the Dutchmen who top the group with six points.

Stoichkov's 23-man squad has been cut to 20 after injuries forced out Red Star Belgrade midfielder Blagoy Georgiev, Wigan Athletic striker Svetoslav Todorov and Litex Lovech defender Rosen Kirilov.

Darren predicts Greg takeover

CRICINFO, undated

Darren Lehmann, the South Australian captain, has pushed for Greg Chappell, the India coach, to take over from John Buchanan as coach of Australia. Buchanan's term ends after the World Cup in the West Indies next year.

Chappell had worked with Lehmann during his term as coach of South Australia, and Lehmann remarked that he was particularly impressed by the way Chappell handled the youngsters in the side.

"Greg Chappell was fantastic for me when he coached us, and he would be excellent with a very good bunch of cricketers," Lehmann told The Age. "The team is changing and there are going to be some young blokes brought in after the World Cup. Once they do that, they're going to need a really good manager to help the young kids out and a good coach, technically, to help them through."

Tim Nielsen, the head coach at the Centre of Excellence and former assistant coach to Buchanan, is one of the prime contenders to succeed Buchanan, as is Tom Moody, the Sri Lanka coach. Both Chappell and Moody have been appointed till the World Cup and while the Indian board is likely to extend Chappell's term, Moody said that he would keep his options open.

However, Geoff Marsh, Buchanan's predecessor, sensed that Moody might be pursued by England. He shared Lehmann's view that Australia would benefit from the services of a coach who has a good rapport with youngsters. "I think England will be after him (Moody)," Marsh said. "I just think he has spent so much time in England coaching Worcestershire, playing in Worcester, and I know he is held in very high esteem over there."

"I coached very much like (Bob) Simpson, and Buchanan came from a different angle, but I think over the next five years, you're going to have a lot of new players coming into the side, younger players, and you would like them to be guided by someone like a Moody or a Tim Nielsen."

PCB rejects Mushtaq qualms

REUTERS, Islamabad

The Pakistan Cricket Board has rejected misgivings by the International Cricket Council (ICC) over the appointment of leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed as assistant coach for the team at the Champions Trophy starting on Saturday.

A board official said that ICC chief executive, Malcolm Speed had sent a message pointing out that Mushtaq's appointment in the ICC organised tournament was unexpected given his role in a match-fixing scandal some years back.

"But the board chairman Shaharyar Khan rejected the point raised by Speed over Mushtaq," the official, who did not wish to be named, told Reuters on Friday.

Shaharyar resigned as chairman on Friday and is expected to be replaced by Dr Naseem Ashraf, another board member and government official.

Americans keen

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are connected by soccer in this country but they're not rabid yet," he told The Sun tabloid.

"That's the challenge and the opportunity of soccer in the US and it's the challenge and the opportunity for David Beckham in the United States.

"Whoever is able to connect and activate that massive potential fanbase wins. And if Beckham can do that and help MLS do that, those are the kinds of marriages made in heaven."

At present, the highest-paid player in the MLS is Chivas USA's Juan Francisco Palencia, who earns a base salary of 692,308 dollars and a total of 1.36 million dollars after guaranteed bonuses.

Chelsea deny

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But Chelsea insist the sand was part of routine pitch work and a club spokesperson said: "Whilst the Chelsea players are away representing their national teams, an 18-day break between home fixtures has allowed our ground staff to carry out routine maintenance work on the Stamford Bridge pitch.

"The drainage system is being improved with additional drainage channels dug to ensure the pitch remains in top condition.

"There are few times in the season when we can ensure our pitch remains in perfect condition.

"The international break allows us to carry out this work towards our aim of maintaining our playing surface as one of the best in the league."

Aussies leave it late



AFP, Madrid

Australia set-up a women's World Cup field hockey final against the Netherlands on Friday thanks to a 1-0 extra-time golden goal win over Spain in a match disrupted by a power blackout.

The floodlight failure occurred with just seconds to play in normal time with Spain still to take a corner.

After a 14-minute delay, Australia defended the corner well to send the match into extra time.

Australia went straight onto the attack and won a corner from where

Suzie Faulkner deflected a shot from Angie Skivington to score the crucial goal.

"It was an even game, it depended who got the luck and we got the break and Suzie Faulkner got the goal," said Australia coach Frank Murray.

"Spain were unlucky. The bizarre circumstances of losing the lights may have upset their final corner but you accept it and move on."

Spain were given little chance against the Aussies after skipper Silvia Munoz had broken her leg against England, but stand-in captain Nuria Camon led by example.

Although Australia dominated



PHOTO: AFP

DELIGHT AND DESPAIR: Australian players celebrate the golden goal against Spain in the semifinal of the Women's hockey World Cup match in Madrid on Friday.

Federer eases into final



AFP, Tokyo

World number one Roger Federer continued his excellent run on hard courts to beat Benjamin Becker of Germany on Saturday for a place in the final at the Japan Open tennis tournament.

The 25-year-old Swiss, who set an Open era record of a 56-match hard court winning streak earlier this year, pulled off a service break once in each set to score a convincing 6-3, 6-4 victory in just one hour.

Britain's star Tim Henman secured a final berth for the first time in two years and seven months when he came back from 2-4 down to beat Lee Hyung-Taik of South Korea 6-4, 7-6.

Federer, who had a tough three-set match against local hope Takao Suzuki in the quarterfinals Friday, got off to a flying start by converting the first chance to break in the second game.

Becker got a break point at 30-40 in the fifth game by charging to the net and forcing Federer to misfire a backhand, but failed to capitalise.

After breaking Becker in the third game of the second set, Federer went on to finish off the struggling German.

Federer hit a total of nine aces against Becker's four. He improved

his winning record on hard courts this season to 48-2.

"The big difference was I got a break behind early (against Suzuki), so once I got a break, I was in control and make sure I can hit a lot of first serves in, because that is the big factor if you win or lose a point here," said Federer.

"Because if you make your first serves, the chance is so big to win the game comfortably. That's what I tried to do," he said.

"But I didn't make many mistakes on my own serve and actually today was just I served well and take my chances. That's what happened today," added Federer.

Federer has made 13 finals out of 14 tournaments this season, winning eight of them including victories at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and the US Open.

"I've reached all my goals this week. Now it's a little last bonus. I really love to win the tournament now," said Federer.

"I hope I can play one more great match. See how it goes. It's gonna be not easy, that for sure. I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to win my first tournament in Japan."

In the women's singles semifinals, Aiko Nakamura kept local hopes alive by beating Chan Yung-jan of Taiwan 7-6, 2-6, 6-4 to make her first career appearance in a final on the tour.

French top seed Marion Bartoli

possession, Spain had five corners to one in the first half.

They were indebted, however, to goalkeeper Maria Rosa who kept out a number of Australian raids.

The Dutch made the final after a convincing 3-1 success against Argentina.

"We are in with a chance. Against the Netherlands we will need to convert the penetrations into the circle," said Murray ahead of Sunday's final.

"We penetrate better than every one so we have to concentrate on that issue."

Netherlands reached the break a goal to the good after the brilliant Sylvia Karres defied the close attentions of two Argentina defenders to deflect the ball into the goal.

After half-time, Argentina knocked the ball around and Agustina Garcia set up a great chance for Alejandra Gulla, however the Netherlands defence held firm on the goal line.

Miek Van Geenhuizen then crushed Argentina's hopes with a stunning tomahawk goal from a narrow angle.

Karres capped a great match by setting up a move that led to Kim Lammers scoring from close to the left post with 10 minutes remaining.

Argentina managed a consolation goal from Maria Hernandez.

USA continued their impressive run by upsetting Olympic champions Germany 1-0 in the 5-8 playoffs.

Tiffany Snow scored the winning goal as the States set up a fifth-place clash with Japan on Saturday.

Kaori Chiba and Sakae Morimoto were the Japanese heroines, scoring one each as Japan beat England 2-0, confining England to a battle for seventh against Germany.

USA started the tournament ranked 12th in the world but Snow smashed the ball home after the break following fine work by Kate Barber to stun the Olympic champions.

USA and Japan now both have a realistic chance to qualify for the next Champion's Trophy.

Meanwhile, China overpowered South Africa 3-0 in the 9-12 playoffs. They play South Korea next for ninth spot after the Koreans beat India 4-1.

South Africa and India will face off to try to avoid the tournament's wooden spoon.

Players are off-limits, says Shah

CRICINFO, undated

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has rejected the ICC's offer to speak directly to the Indian players regarding the Members Participation Agreement (MPA).

David Richardson, the ICC general manager, cricket operations, had suggested that the ICC be allowed to deal directly with the Indian players regarding issues concerning them.

"It has been made clear to the ICC that they cannot deal directly with the Indian players," Niranjan Shah, the BCCI secretary told PTI. "They have to come through the board."

Shah added that the Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh cricket boards expressed similar reservations on the ICC dealing directly with players.

"Not only the BCCI, but Sri Lanka Cricket, the Pakistan Cricket Board and the Bangladesh Cricket Board have said at the recent ICC meeting that on any issue related to the players, the ICC has to approach the boards first. As per norms in international cricket administration, any issue that concerns a player has to address through the respective board. Similarly, any relevant matter raised by the players is communicated to the ICC by the board concerned."

The MPA lays down guidelines and restrictions that the players must follow for ICC events, including those that deal with ambush marketing. While almost all the other ICC members are ready to sign the MPA, the BCCI announced last week that it would not do so in its present form because it affected its commercial interests.

Percy Sonn, the ICC president, had cautioned India that it's chances of being the co-hosts of the 2011 World Cup could be jeopardised if they refused to comply with the MPA but hoped that an agreement would be reached. However, Shah said that the BCCI wasn't very concerned, as the event is still five years away. He added that a letter had already been sent to the ICC, detailing India's stand on the MPA.



PHOTO: AFP

England captain Andrew Flintoff (R) addresses a press conference while coach Duncan Fletcher listens in New Delhi yesterday.