



Did U Know?

Baseball's National League was born in 1876. Eight competing baseball teams met in New York City's Grand Central Hotel.



Tom Moody
(Sri Lanka cricket coach)
"If, as a player, you are in any doubt about any medication you want to take, you pick up the phone and ask. It's not that difficult."
Who has little sympathy with players who plead ignorance over banned substances.

Punter firm on catch

CRICINFO, undated

Not for the first time in this tournament, the issue of a fielder being unsure about the legality of a catch cropped up again and Ricky Ponting reiterated his stance on the need for an agreement between captains. As one who's often been vocal on the issue of uncertainty surrounding catches, Ponting revealed that his suggestion for an agreement had been vetoed by captains around the world.

The issue first rose its head during England's clash against the West Indies at Ahmedabad after Dwayne Bravo dismissed Michael Yardy, diving forward -- but replays suggested the ball might have bounced just before. Unlike that instance, though, Michael Clarke -- who lunged forward to latch on to an airy pat from Jacob Oram -- immediately signalled to the umpires that he wasn't sure if the ball had bounced in front of him.

"The way Pup (Clarke) handled that tonight is exactly the way it should be handled," Ponting asserted. "He wasn't 100% sure he caught it. Since I have been captain of this team, I have tried to have an agreement with every opposition captain. I did have until the Super Series last year when we had the annual captains meeting. I pushed it there to all the captains and no one really wanted to agree to it. We are back to where we were earlier with umpires referring to the third umpire which I don't think is

Flemo talks for Aussies

AFP, Sydney

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming expects Australia to regain the Ashes from England provided their best players remain fit during the November-January cricket series.

Fleming, regarded by many critics as the most astute captain in international cricket, said Australia's form in the Champions Trophy tournament in India justifiably installed them as strong favourites for the five-Test series, starting in Brisbane on November 23.

Fleming (78), who is closing in on Australian Allan Border's record (93 times) as most-capped Test skipper, said England would face a sizeable challenge to retain the urn, especially with regular captain Michael Vaughan and swing bowler Simon Jones to miss the series with injuries.

"The fact they're missing a few players is going to be a key factor for me," Fleming was reported saying in Thursday's Australian press from India.

"They were able to hold their team pretty much all the way through that last series in England, and that's massive value.

"If they can get their players back and get them in form, it will even the ledger up.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 8

MSC do it again

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club once again passed the 'mettle' detector with flying colours when they put aside a possible players' rebellion to crush Green Delta Premier Hockey League leaders and archrivals Abahani 3-0 yesterday.

Three key players -- Yamin Mia, Maksud Alam Habul and Mamunur Rahman Chayan -- had threatened not to play unless they received payment. But assurance from the club officials on the eve of the crucial league game convinced the trio to take their place in the Mohammedan eleven and sparkle in a first half show that was enough to bring them back in the title race.

Yamin said that he and his colleagues, who threatened to sit out, played because a high club official last night assured them of payment very soon. "We believe that this time, we will get our dues. To show respect to the club secretary's word, we decided to play," Yamin informed.

Taking full advantage of a miserable rival defence, Ariful Haque Prince fired twice and Shamim Reza added the other -- all in the first half -- as the black and whites broke the Abahani morale in an eventful match.

"We were determined to bounce back after the defeat to Mariners (2-1) and the team spirit helped us win today," told keeper and Mohammedan captain

Mahbubullah Shakil.

Abahani, perhaps, suffered from complacency after a 7-0 thrashing of Mariners in their previous game and never found their attacking flair although they wasted a penalty stroke and saw Indian umpire Virender Singh rule out two goals.

Virender's weak officiating marred the clash of the titans and the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium turned into a battleground as the match was stopped for 35 minutes on the brink of the breather following the missiles hurled by the Abahani fans.

The match official signalled for a goal when Abahani's Indian forward Prakash Chalke pushed the ball home from a melee seconds before the short hooter but in the face of severe protest from Mohammedan players that got physical, he withdrew his decision.

Virender, who was pushed by Mohammedan's ill-tempered midfielder Imran Haider earlier, finally showed the Pakistani a yellow card but the same player escaped a possible send-off when he kicked out rival defender Issa Mia's stick out of the ground.

"The late first half goal could have worked as an inspiration for us but the umpire's decision to disallow Prakash's goal was really disappointing. But there is no excuse for playing bad," admitted Abahani coach Mahub Harun.

"I had briefed them how Mohammedan would try to break on penalty corners and my players failed to apply themselves," the

former national captain told referring to the brace by Prince.

Mohammedan scored from the first penalty corner after fifth minute when Chayan ran the ball to the right side of the Abahani box to set unmarked Prince who deflected home neatly.

Abahani had a golden chance to equalise when they earned a penalty stroke three minutes later after Yamin tripped Prakash inside the box. But Russell Mahmud Jimmy's hit came off the upright.

In the very next minute, Shamim Reza doubled the lead from a scramble while Mohammedan's third -- the second by national striker Prince from an 18-minute penalty corner -- was an action replay of the first as Abahani defenders once again failed to read the situation.

In spite of a dismal show, Abahani forced half a dozen penalty corners but Issa Mia struck high into the net while Jimmy hit the woodwork.

In the second half, Mohammedan went on the defensive as the sky-blues created a few openings but they went without scoring in a match for the first time this season.

Abahani, who failed to take revenge of their 2-1 defeat to Mohammedan in last month's Club Cup final, still maintained joint-lead with Usha Krira Chakra on 18 points from seven outings while Mohammedan moved to third place with 13 points from six matches.



Mohammedan striker Ariful Haq Prince (R) celebrates his second goal with teammate Maksud Alam Habul (C) as Abahani star Russell Mahmud Jimmy looks the other way during their Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Gayle takes WI into final



AFP, Jaipur

Chris Gayle smashed a blistering century to fire the West Indies into the Champions Trophy final with a six-wicket win over a hapless South Africa here on Thursday.

The 27-year-old opener gave a stunning display of aggressive batting as the West Indies made a mockery of South Africa's challenging total of 258-8 to win with six overs to spare in the semi-final.

Defending champions West Indies will clash with Australia in the final at Mumbai on Sunday.

Gayle reduced the day-night match to a no-contest with his breath-taking strokes on both sides of the wicket, hammering three sixes and 17 fours in a 135-ball knock for his 15th century in 150 one-day internationals.

He received valuable support from Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who cracked a solid 57 before retiring hurt with cramps. They added 154 to ensure the West Indies keep their reputation intact of beating South Africa in big events.

The West Indies defeated South Africa in the 2003 World Cup and then in the Champions Trophy in England the following year. The defeats contributed to South Africa's failure to reach the semi-finals on both the occasions.

South Africa earlier rode of Herschelle Gibbs's impressive 77 to post their highest total in the tournament, but were later reduced to a state of helplessness by Gayle's pyrotechnics.

Fast bowlers had played crucial roles in South Africa's victories in the last two group matches against Sri Lanka and Pakistan, but looked clueless against left-handed openers Gayle and Chanderpaul.

Gayle treated the South African attack with sheer contempt, setting the trend with two fours in Shaun Pollock's opening over. Boundaries continued to come thick and fast as

he raced his half-century off just 48 balls.

He became the first batsman to score three centuries, having made an unbeaten 104 against Bangladesh in the qualifying round and 101 against England in a group match. He is also the only batsman with more than 400 runs.

Chanderpaul matched his partner shot for shot in early stages as the West Indies plundered 100 in less than 17 overs. When he retired hurt, his team needed 105 more to win with all wickets in hand.

The West Indies never looked under pressure even after losing

Ramnaresh Sarwan (27), Dwayne Bravo (15), skipper Brian Lara (nine) and Runako Morton (nought) in the space of 48 runs.

Lara became the fourth batsman to hit 1,000 fours in one-day internationals after India's Sachin Tendulkar, Australian Adam Gilchrist and Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya.

Earlier Gibbs, with 16 runs in the previous three matches, returned to form with a half-century after his

SEE PAGE 22 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

CARIBBEAN SHOT: West Indies opener Chris Gayle pulls the ball during the second semifinal of the ICC Champions Trophy against South Africa at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Thursday.

Imran terms ban 'harsh'

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan cricket legend Imran Khan said Thursday the "harsh" bans handed to Pakistan's two key pace bowlers had dealt a major blow to the team's World Cup chances.

A Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) tribunal Wednesday banned pace spearhead Shoaib Akhtar for two years and teammate Mohammad Asif for one year after the pair tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone.

"There has to be an example set for future generations as steroids are harmful and banned -- but without knowing the details of the judgment I would say it's a harsh decision," Imran told AFP from New

Delhi.

The three-man panel headed by an ex-provincial governor, Shahid Hamid, held a two-week investigation and ruled the duo failed to prove their innocence. Both players waived their right to have their 'B' samples tested.

"Their ban will severely reduce Pakistan's chances in next year's World Cup in the West Indies," said former captain Imran, who led Pakistan to their only Cup win in 1992.

All-rounder Imran is in the Indian capital for the Champions Trophy -- the competition from which Akhtar, 31, and Asif, 23, were withdrawn on October 16 after the drugs claims surfaced.

The bans were the first involving performance-enhancing drugs in international cricket. Akhtar's ban was also the heaviest ever for a

cricketer found guilty of taking drugs.

The pair have the right to appeal for a review within seven days to the tribunal; to appeal against the ban to the PCB within the next 30 days; or to raise the ban in the Court of Arbitration of Sports in Switzerland.

Pakistan's chief selector Wasim Bari said the ban was "tragic" for Pakistan's chances in the World Cup.

"Both Akhtar and Asif are experienced, wicket-taking bowlers and their absence means Pakistan will be without key strike bowlers," said Bari, also a previous Pakistan skipper.

Former captain and coach Javed Miandad said the ban spelled an end to the mercurial career of Akhtar, who bowled the

SEE PAGE 22 COL 2

Intikhab sets 'an example'

REUTERS, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Intikhab Alam has said he has no regrets about imposing the doping bans on Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif that effectively ruled them out of the 2007 World Cup.

"We have set the example for others," Alam, a member of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) drug testing tribunal, told the Bigstar Cricket Web site on Thursday.

"We didn't have any doubts in our minds about what we have announced.

"They admitted themselves that they had been taking dietary supplements. They are both adults and players have to be responsible for their own actions. Sometimes you have to take these decisions," the former Pakistan coach said.

"It's sad that it happened but now, since we have taken that decision, the youngsters coming up will be very very careful."

A PCB tribunal on Wednesday banned Shoaib for two years and fellow fast bowler Asif for one after they had tested positive for the steroid nandrolone.

The pair were recalled from the Champions Trophy in India last month after the PCB received the results of the out-of-competition tests carried out in Pakistan before the tournament.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

Glenn claims near fitness

BBC ONLINE, undated

Veteran Australia paceman Glenn McGrath believes he is close to full form and fitness after his man-of-the-match display against New Zealand.

McGrath took 3-22 in bowling 10 straight overs as the Aussies clinched a place in the Champions Trophy final.

"I am improving in every game," said McGrath, who missed two tours earlier this year to be with his ill wife.

"That is what I wanted to achieve on this tour especially and at the moment I am not too far away from 100%."

That is bad news for either South Africa or West Indies, who face Australia in Mumbai on Sunday, and England as they prepare for the Ashes series, starting at the end of November.

Captain Ricky Ponting watched McGrath run through the Kiwi top order with a display of accuracy, taking advantage of movement off the seam.

"On that sort of wicket we knew it would do something with the new ball and thought it might do more at night time," said Ponting.

"That is exactly what happened. Glenn put the ball in the right area and bowled beautifully."

World champions Australia had never reached the Champions Trophy final before in four previous attempts.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

Akhtar, Asif to appeal

Cricket

AGENCIES, undated

Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar will appeal against a two-year doping ban, his doctor said Thursday, as a tribunal's report showed the paceman took vitamins and herbal medicines without telling team staff.

"Akhtar is devastated by the decision and he is definitely going to appeal against the ban," the controversial fast bowler's personal doctor and close friend Tauseef Razzaq

whose basis Akhtar should have been cleared," said Tauseef.

Akhtar said last month that he had never "knowingly" taken performance-enhancing drugs. He and Asif both waived their right to have their "B samples" tested before the tribunal handed down its verdict.

Under International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations no sanction is imposed for doping if the player is able to establish that he did not know or suspect he took a banned drug, the tribunal said in its report into the scandal.

But the 19-page report also said that Akhtar took supplements, vitamins and herbal medicines on "general wisdom" and never told the team staff and doctor about their use.

"Akhtar told the tribunal he was taking vitamins T-BOMB II, Promax-50 and Viper" obtained from a shop, from London and from friends, the report said.

"Akhtar said that he had been taking them since 1999 on the basis of general wisdom based on his contacts with friends and others and that he had never consulted even his medical counsels."

The bowler also admitted he failed to tell coach Bob Woolmer, team physiotherapist Darryn Lifson or PCB medical advisor Sohail Saleem "because they have never asked him and none of them were banned items."

His medical counsel also said Akhtar had been taking a herbal medicine called kushta, or tribulus terrestris, which he said was not banned, the report added.

Akhtar tested negative on two previous occasions in 2003 and 2004.

He further said that he had never seen a WADA (World Anti Doping Agency) list of banned

SEE PAGE 22 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

DESTINATION IGNOMINY: Pakistan pacemen Mohammad Asif (R) and Shoaib Akhtar arrive at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore to attend the doping tribunal hearing on Wednesday.

told AFP.

A Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) tribunal Wednesday banned Mohammad Asif, 23, for one on Wednesday after they tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone.

Razzaq said he and other medical counsel tried their best to convince the tribunal that Akhtar was innocent.

"There are a number of examples where athletes were given the benefit of the doubt for using substances unknowingly and there are studies by renowned universities of the world on



PHOTO: STAR

Mashrafe Bin Mortuza (C) stretches as coach Dav Whatmore helps him out during a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.