



Did U Know?

Chris Gayle of West Indies scored 133 not out from 135 balls in the Champions Trophy semifinal against South Africa at the Sardar Patel Stadium on November 2, 2006. It was his fifteenth ODI century.



Carlo Ancelotti
(AC Milan coach)
"Nobody has more determination or is capable of making such a difference in a match. He is better than Ronaldinho."
On Brazilian playmaker Kaka.



ESPN
English Premier Football League
Fulham v Everton
Live at 6:40 pm
Liverpool v Reading
Live at 8:55 pm
Primera Liga
Deportivo v Barcelona
Live at 2:55 am (Sunday)
STAR Sports
English Premier Football League
Man United v Portsmouth
Live at 8:55 pm
Newcastle United v Sheffield United
Live at 11:10 pm

BCCI strikes back at Speed

PTI, Mumbai

The Indian cricket board on Friday hit back at International Cricket Council CEO Malcolm Speed, accusing him of interfering in its affairs and deriding Indian cricket. It also said, that Speed had "hijacked" the press conference of ICC President Percy Sonn and exceeded his brief in Mohali on Thursday where he launched a broadside against the Indian cricket establishment.

In a strongly worded statement, BCCI's Chief Administrative Officer Ratnakar Shetty also challenged Speed by asking whether he will have the guts to say that the England and Wales Cricket Board is not running its affairs well because the England team has never won the World Cup, cricket's piece de resistance.

"What Speed did by talking about the status of Indian cricket and the performance is nothing but gross interference in the affairs of the Indian Board.

"In any case, wonder how much does he actually know about the stakeholders in Indian cricket to take such swipes from time to time? "Speed has chosen the wrong time and wrong place to debunk Indian cricket and its stakeholders," Shetty said.

"The media conference in Mohali on Wednesday was ostensibly called for the president of the International Cricket Council Percy Sonn to interact with the Indian media, but it was hijacked by the irrepressible ICC Chief Executive Malcolm Speed.

"Speed, for the umpteenth time, harangued the Indian Board. This time he went a step further, deriding the entire Indian cricket itself," Shetty charged.

Significantly the war of words between the two parties has been renewed just prior to the two-day ICC Executive Board meeting here scheduled for Saturday and in which the Members Participation Agreement, which the BCCI has refused to sign in its present form, will come up for discussion.

Sangakkara in city

First semifinal today

SPORTS REPORTER



Cricket League.

The elegant left-hander, a veteran of 62 Tests and 180 ODIs, is the first big name to make appearance in the season's curtain raiser tournament for the defending champions, who roped in the ace Lankan player ahead of their tomorrow's semifinal against Partex Group at the Dhanmondi National Cricket Stadium.

The first semifinal between last year's runners-up Epyllion led by Tushar Imran and national skipper Habibul Bashar-led Acme

Laboratories will be held today at the same venue.

The 29-year old wicketkeeper cum batsman, however, was reluctant to talk with the press on arrival due to jetlag.

"I accepted the offer to come here because it is better to play cricket and score runs rather than enjoying a time off. Actually, we have no international or domestic engagement right at the moment," he told after landing at the Zia International Airport.

"As a professional, I am ready to play anywhere. So, there can't be any questions about motivation. I know that some of our cricketers played in Dhaka previously and I am also ready to play in the Dhaka League if I get offer and the time," Sangakkara said responding to a question.

He, however, refused to make any comments on their early exit from the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy in India where they were pre-

tournament favourites but failed to make it to the last four.

Sri Lanka's early exit also inspired Epyllion to contact skipper Mahela Jayawardene but there effort to sign him was unsuccessful, it was learned.

Epyllion, however, might not feel the absence of a foreign recruit as they have an enviable local collection: Tushar, national vice-captain Shahriar Nafees, inform bowlers Enamul Haque and Tapash Baisya and young all-rounders Sakib Al Hasan and Forhad Reza.

Indian Sandeep Sharma also arrived in the capital to play for Acme, who fielded Pakistani Zahoor Elahi in the group stage. They will also be boosted by the presence of ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, Manzarul Islam Rana, Ehsanul Haque, Hannan Sarker and promising Marshal Ayub besides Bashar.

The final is slated for November 7.

Lara relishes Aussie battle



AFP, Jaipur

West Indies cricket captain Brian Lara has said his team are gaining momentum ahead of the Champions Trophy final against Australia.

"We are building up the momentum and the guys have started believing in themselves," Lara said after his team's crushing six-wicket victory over second-ranked South Africa in the semifinal here on Thursday.

The West Indies will clash with world champions Australia at Mumbai on Sunday.

Left-handed opener Chris Gayle slammed an unbeaten 133 as the West Indies surpassed South Africa's challenging total of 258-8 with six overs to spare in the day-night match.

"We just have to keep the momentum going and analyse each game ... win or lose, just go back and think about it. I think it is going to be exciting times ahead for us, especially in one-dayers," said Lara.

"It's nice to be playing the world champions in the final. It says a lot about our effort... getting past South Africa, and beating India and Australia in group matches. So, we are looking forward to the challenge."

The West Indies began the tournament on a sensational note when they defeated Australia in their opening group match at Mumbai, but Lara said the final at the same venue would be different.

"Australia have gained some momentum since they lost to us. They are very confident of their chances. We have to realise that we are going to play a completely different opposition to the one we played against," he said.

"That time Australia were playing their first match and we had a sort of

an advantage. It's a challenge but we will back ourselves."

Lara said he was confident his side would deliver in the final because they had been playing good cricket recently. His team beat India at home and then qualified for a triangular series final in Malaysia before losing to Australia.

"I won't say it's an unfinished business against Australia. I just feel it's nice to play them in the final again," said Lara.

"Our one-day game has always been pretty good. It just required a little bit of fine-tuning. We did that in Malaysia. We were forced to play the qualifying round here and that in itself gave us a little bit of competitive cricket."

The West Indies beat Bangladesh and Zimbabwe in the qualifying round to make it to the main draw of the ongoing tournament.

Lara said his team owed the

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West Indies players Ian Bradshaw (L), Runako Morton (C) and Brian Lara wait for their luggage at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Airport upon their arrival in Mumbai on Friday.

Freddie and co fly Down Under



CRICINFO, undated

England's cricketers departed from Heathrow Airport to embark on the biggest challenge of their sporting lives -- the Ashes series in Australia -- on Friday. Already, their ignominious exit from the Champions Trophy has been consigned to the dustbin of history, as Andrew Flintoff and his squad prepare to focus on the five Test matches that could make or break their reputations. "It's going to be incredible," Flintoff told The Sun on the eve of his side's departure. "Our win last summer was the first time I'd experienced The Ashes and it was an amazing, emotional roller-coaster. But this series it is likely to be even bigger and tougher because we're in Australia. It's a fantastic prospect for everyone on the trip."

Flintoff was England's lieviathan in last summer's epic triumph, scoring 402 runs and taking 24 wickets to secure the narrowest of 2-1 victories. He is now the captain of the side as well, taking over where Michael

Vaughan left off, and is relishing the challenge of leading the team out at Brisbane on the morning of November 23, a date that has been etched on his brain for months.

"I'd be lying if I said I hadn't thought about what it will be like leading out England in those matches. There'll be all the attention, all the spotlight, all the rivalry and all the history. Of course I've thought about it -- and it gives me a tingle. I'm chomping at the bit to get started."

It has been a race against time to get Flintoff fit for this tour, after his 2006 season was disrupted by a long-standing ankle problem that required further surgery. But he had a decent work-out during England's Champions Trophy campaign, spending some time out in the middle in the final match against West Indies and bowling five decent, if rusty, overs to boot.

Even so, he will remember only too well his traumatic experience on the last Ashes tour in 2002-03, when he arrived unfit after undergoing a hernia operation, and was forced to fly home without playing a single Test. "It was a pretty miserable time for me," he conceded. "But I'm fortunate to have

another chance and I'm going to relish that rather than thinking what might have been.

"I'm not one for making big statements or predictions but we're going down there in a confident frame of mind. We'll have to play well to succeed, probably even better than we did in 2005. But we have lads who can perform at the highest level. I believe we have a good chance."

England arrive in Sydney, via Hong Kong, on Sunday afternoon, where they will enter into a maelstrom of publicity as the Australian public gear themselves up for a massive contest. "I don't know if the series can be as good as the one last year," said Flintoff, "but one thing I know is, it will be very tough and competitive."

England open their tour with a one-day game against an Australian Prime Minister's XI at Canberra on 10 November, followed by three-day games against New South Wales and South Australia.



Sri Lanka star Kumar Sangakkara (R) is seen here on his arrival at the Zia International Airport in Dhaka yesterday morning.

Sonali Bank in Super 5

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank confirmed a Super Five berth in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League with a match in hand when they edged contenders Ajax Sporting Club 2-1 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Sumon's 11th minute field goal gave the bankers a 1-0 lead at the break but Ajax defender Rajib cancelled the advantage from a penalty corner on the hour mark.

Bank put pressure in search of a match winner and it told with four minutes remaining on the clock when Moksed found the mark. Ajax, who began their penultimate round on six points, were in must win situation to stay alive for a place in the super league but it were bank who grabbed the final spot with 12 points in seven games.

Joint leaders Abahani and Usha, level on 18 points, Mohammedan (13 points) and Mariners (12) are the other teams to enter the championship.

In today's lone match, Mariners take on bottom-table Bangladesh Sporting Club at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium at 2.45pm.

Clarke eyes a fight

BBC ONLINE, undated

Australia are braced for a tough battle with West Indies in Sunday's Champions Trophy final in Mumbai.

The holders beat Australia in the first round group stage and maintained that form as they dispatched South Africa by six wickets in the semifinals.

"West Indies have got a lot of fantastic players and have played well as a team.

"They've got the likes of Lara, Gayle and some young guys coming on," said Australia batsman Michael Clarke.

The Champions Trophy is the one major title Australia have never won. They are the game's top ranked one-day side and will start favourites in the final, having beaten England, India and New Zealand impressively since losing to Brian Lara's side.

"After losing the first game we knew it was going to be a tough run.

"We knew we had to play very good cricket to end up where we are now and I think we have done that," said Clarke.

"It didn't bother me at all who we'd play in the final once Australia got there.

"It's a pretty big tournament, and hopefully we will play better than the West Indies and win the final."

Clarke and West Indies opener Chris Gayle were involved in a verbal exchange during the first round match, but only Gayle was fined by match referee Mike Procter for breaching the players' code of conduct.

"Chris and I get along very well. I have known him since I was 18 - I met him at the Australian Cricket Academy. I look forward to friendly banter out there again," Clarke commented.

Ponting's night



CRICINFO, undated

Australia captain Ricky Ponting picked up both major honours at the annual ICC Awards in Mumbai, being named Player of the Year and Test Player of the Year.

Australia's Michael Hussey was named as the winner of the ODI Player of the Year.

During the voting period Hussey played 25 ODIs and enjoyed a spectacular level of success. In those matches he scored 769 runs at an average of 64.80. He beat off the challenge of Ponting, India's Yuvraj Singh and Sri Lanka's Mahela Jayawardene to secure the award.

Jayawardene was named Captain of the Year. He beat off competition from Ponting, Michael Vaughan, England's Ashes-winning skipper, and India's captain Rahul Dravid.

David was named captain of the World Test Team of the Year. Six

teams were represented in the 12-man line-up, four of which -- Ponting, Andrew Flintoff, Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath -- were also named in the World Test Team of the Year in 2005.

Jayawardene was chosen to lead the ODI Team of the Year and five countries were represented in the 12-man line-up. But only three players -- Adam Gilchrist, Flintoff and Andrew Symonds -- also appeared in the World ODI Team of the Year in 2005. Indeed, Gilchrist and Flintoff also appeared in the 2004 line-up.

England batsman Ian Bell was picked as Emerging Player of the Year. During the voting period between August 1, 2005 and August 8, 2006, Bell played 13 Tests, scoring 958 runs at an average of 41.65. He hit four centuries and five fifties in that time.

Australia's captain Karen Rolton won the inaugural Women's Player of the Year award and Simon Taufel was named Umpire of the Year for the third successive time.

The England team won the

Biman land safely

SPORTS REPORTER

The group stages of this year's GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League ended yesterday with Bangladesh Biman's crushing seven-wicket win over newcomers Raju Fish Culture at the Fatullah Stadium.

Biman only took 13.4 overs to eclipse the paltry 54-run target set by Raju Fish after being put into bat.

All-rounder Mushfiq Babu took five wickets for 19 while left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain took three wickets as Raju Fish were bowled out for only 53 in 23.1 overs. Monirul top-scored with 19 not out.

Biman lost three wickets in their pursuit of the small total but Jamaluddin Babu was unbeaten on 28 as the national airliner ended this inconsequential match.

Laxman dreams of WC berth

PTI, Hyderabad

Undeterred by his exclusion from India's one-day squad for the tour of South Africa, middle order batsman VVS Laxman says the omission and remarks over his fitness has strengthened his resolve to find a place in the World Cup team.

The Hyderabad player, who turned 33 three days ago, said he still had enough opportunities to prove himself and gain a place in the Indian team for the quadrennial event to be staged in the Caribbean in March-April.

"I will work hard and try to get

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'Mind your pull shot'

CRICINFO, undated

Shane Watson must think carefully before trying one of his favourite pull shots in Sunday's Champions Trophy final against West Indies, according to John Buchanan. Watson has been out pulling three times from his four innings in the tournament, including against West Indies when Ian Bradshaw had him caught at mid-on attempting a pull before he had scored.

"There's probably three or four times, if we go back to (the DLF Cup in) Malaysia, that Shane has played a cross-batted shot early in his innings," Buchanan told AAP. "Again it's one of his strong shots, he cuts well and he pulls well and often your strength can be your weakness."

"I think it's not necessarily a case of putting it in the closet, it's a case of actually using it at the appropriate time. Probably the times he has been dismissed on it have been very, very early in his innings. So maybe the decision making at that point in time, not necessarily the execution," Buchanan said.

Watson was again lured into a pull shot when he was yet to get off the mark in the semifinal against New Zealand and he was caught at mid-off. Ricky Ponting said Watson would learn from his mistakes. "He didn't really know the pace and bounce of the (pitch)," Ponting said.

"It was one of the first balls he faced for the innings, so opening or batting in the top order against the new ball you can be a bit surprised with the pace and the bounce. I think that's what's happened with Shane. He'll learn. I've defended him right the way through and I'll keep doing it. The way he played against India (scoring 50) is the way we know he can play, and I think long term for us he'll be a very good option up there."



Australian coach John Buchanan (L) and fast bowler Brett Lee watch intently as Ricky Ponting takes aim at a stump during a practice session in Mumbai on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP