

Div II cricket super league

Partex Sporting Club earned an impressive eight-wicket victory over Kathal Bagan Club in the Acme Second Division super league at the Mirpur City Club ground yesterday, reports UNB.

Opting to bat, Kathal Bagan were shot out for a 25 in 16.2 overs.

In reply, Partex SC reached their target making 28 for two in 10.3 overs.

In the day's Second Division relegation league, Uddity Club defeated Lalbagh USC by six wickets.

Deciding to bat, Lalbagh USC scored 163 all out in 37.3 overs with Sumon and Rubel making 35 runs each. In reply, Uddity made 167 for four in 36.1 overs with opener Morshed scoring 46 runs.

Dreaming beyond

From Page 13

Brentwood where the Bangladesh team is lodging is that the old devil is getting back his form.

Khaled Mashud has always been an inspiration behind the stumps, and he can also bat occasionally.

Then we have the bowlers Hasibul Hossain, Manjurul Islam, Neeqamur Rashid and Shafuddin Ahmed. Some dare to say our weaker department is bowling. But, remember how Sachin T. once floored West Indies in a tournament in India and, more recently, how Ajay Jadeja changed the whole complexion of the match in a single over against England at Sharjah.

It happens all the time in cricket. That's why it is cricket. The pundits, among them the Bangladesh manager Tanvir Mazhar, are not giving Bangladesh a chance even against Scotland because of the English county players. What an irony! Scottish fortunes boosted by none other than the English.

Admittedly I am no pundit. And, that's why I say, let's go beyond Scotland. Yes, I know the dreaded Loch Ness is not too far up north. To spring a surprise is possible if all our players click and the entire opposition - whatever their might - fails. It can happen because this is cricket.

Cutting the root

From Page 13

had been the case with the Wills International Cup cricket tournament.

The BCB-BFF tug of war over control of the Bangabandhu National Stadium has gone too far, and the taxpayers are bearing the brunt of it. Moving back and forth from football to cricket only suggests that the council has not made up its mind on which to give priority to, although, even to a layman's eyes, the choice is very simple.

Over the years, barring a couple of titles in some sub-standard tournaments, that too, at the regional level, our footballers have been anything but promising. Finishing second to India in the SAF football championship could, in no way, be taken as an encouraging sign that some day our footballers would rub shoulders with world's best. Qualification for the World Cup could only be part of the wildest of dreams. The reality, albeit painful, is very simple: our footballers are among the lesser-lings of Asia. Let alone the world. And, it is highly unlikely, they will bring about a dramatic improvement in near future.

Conversely, our cricketers have proved their worth. Despite the fact that they have not produced their best in recent times, still they have done what the footballers will not even dare to imagine. That we have a brighter future in cricket is written clearly on the wall. Everyone sees it, except the NSC people.

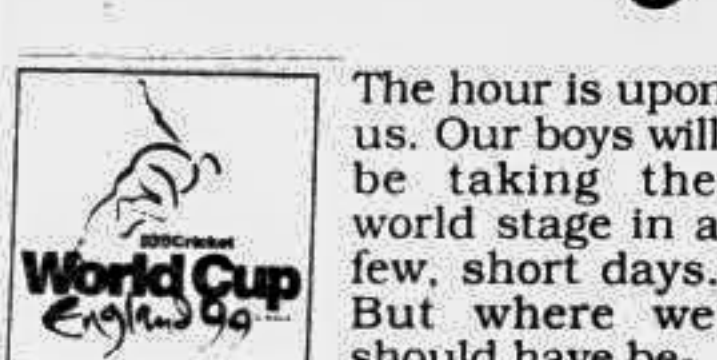
Nothing justifies the NSC inclination towards giving the BFF the leverage. Its obsession with stop-gap arrangements has really gone too far. The dispute over the control of the Bangabandhu National Stadium should not have arisen in the first place. The silly-dallying is costing the tax-payers millions of taka.

Even more enraging is the BCB's sudden 'softened stance' reflected in the gentleman's offer extended by its secretary-general Syed Ashraf Haq. In a generous gesture to end the long drawn-out tug of war, the former national cricketer expressed willingness on behalf of the board to settle for the Mirpur Stadium. Does he know what he is talking about? Why then were all the infrastructure development works not centred around the Mirpur Stadium? Does he have the slightest knowledge of the money its proposed transfer of venue would involve? What happens to the enhanced floodlight system, electronic scoreboard?

One of the country's Bengali dailies recently reported that the International Cricket Council had been made aware of the change of guards at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and that the game's governing body was not too elated about the dramatic development. For a nation aspiring to get the Test status, what is needed first and foremost is an effective governing body for cricketing affairs. The BCB-BFF tussle plus the NSC obsession with stop-gap arrangements are doing the country's prospects more harms than good.

The Bangabandhu National Stadium is the heart of the country's cricketing activities, and should remain so. Towards getting the coveted Test status, Bangladesh has to prove it has the requisite domestic set-up and adequate infrastructure. Workers digging up pitches on completion of the cricket season to make way for football is not an inspiring sight. More than anything else, it smacks of myopic vision on the part of the policy-planners at the NSC.

Preserving a dream, paying the dues



The hour is upon us. Our boys will be taking the world stage in a few short days. But where we should have been bursting with unbridled enthusiasm and overwhelming anticipation, we are mired in a sense of impending doom. The pessimism and disappointment is justified. The Bangladesh team has done precious little since their historic win at the ICC championships two years ago. Whereas Kenya was on a keel with us then, they have managed to exact unchallenged domination over us in recent encounters. Our pride has understandably been choked.

Recently, there has been a tendency to put all the blame on the players. They have been charged with leniency in their duties, spoiled behaviour and the lack of courage and vim. Furthermore, we have started to believe and this was most evident in the team manager's farewell speech before the team went to England that our players lack the pure cricketing ability that is required to succeed at the top level. The disappointment is beyond contention. The players are definitely not above reproach. They are after all the ones who are playing. However, if we want a full picture of why things have gone wrong we must look at other clue sources as well.

The cricket authorities of Bangladesh have been indulging in much self-paths of late. They claim that much money and effort has been put into the team recently. Anyone who will provide grand financial figures regarding the national team with great alacrity. And now they feel that they deserve the box seats at Lord's more than the players deserve a place on the field. But how about we look at some of the things that the esteemed BCB officials have not done in the last couple of years.

One of the first things that a team needs in international cricket these days is a technical knowledge bank. This preferably includes a technical adviser for the team but more importantly it covers extensive knowledge about each and every potential playing condition, erudition about mental, physical and cricketing abilities of the opposition players, thorough assessment of its own players' potential and exact ideas about how to deal with any playing situation.

For this the team needs a ready source of video and literary material that will provide them with information about the foreign teams and conditions and a system of recording the data concerning its own players. It is not possible to do well in international cricket without such arrangements. Nowadays, the requirement

and use of technical knowledge has become so advanced that it is almost impossible to win with pure talent alone. Teams such as South Africa and Australia, which possess so much natural talent, still make the heaviest use of technical expertise. One of the more fascinating sights during the recently held mini World Cup was that of South African coach Bob Woolmer hunched behind his



RAFIQUE

lap-top computer, constantly recording the data on each and every aspect of his team's performance. The Bangladeshi men are definitely not so talented that they will vanquish the opposition or even put up a proper fight by the dint of their cricketing abilities alone.

The point that has been brought up about technical knowledge may seem painfully obvious to the readers. Indeed they tend to readily suggest themselves to anyone with half a cricketing brain. But what maybe more disturbing for Bangladeshi cricket fans is that these ideas have not revealed themselves to the cricket authorities of Bangladesh.

There is no system in place under which the players can gather knowledge about the opposition. There are no video sources, no literary sources, nothing, zilch, didly squat. One would be kind to forgive the expatriates but many would find that this situation is very appalling.

How can our players go and face the best players in the world without any sort of technical knowledge about their opposition? More importantly why have not the much vaunted cricketing experts of Bangladesh grasped this idea till now? One would definitely feel that the setting up of a technical bank would be within the means of a Board that can arrange one of the biggest tournaments in the world. Maybe the thinking among authorities is that our players are not educated enough to make proper use of technical facilities. They point towards the modest educational backgrounds of the likes of Mohammad Rafique to support this view. However, the fact is, before the recently con-

cluded tri-nation tournament in Dhaka, Aminul Islam said that it was only Rafique who provided him with any pertinent advice about dealing with the likes of Maurice Odumbe and Steve Tikolo.

Therefore, the officials would probably be better served to point towards their own lack of initiative rather than singling out the supposed inherent incapability of the cricketers. No matter what the argument is from the BCB front, nothing can warrant the absolute lack of any effort to provide players with valuable ancillary facilities such as technical support. Would they now suggest that the absence of a proper gym or an exclusive stadium for the national team is also the result of the players not possessing higher academic degrees?

Some have suggested in the last few weeks that Bangladesh is sending out the worst team in the country's history to play in this World Cup. Those who charged this were probably using thought facilities that do not reside in their skull. For this is the team that won the ICC trophy for the first time in the nation's history. This is the team that beat the West Indies "A" side in a one-day series at home. And this is the team that we merrily expect to score over 200 against any opposition. One cannot say the same about any Bangladesh team of the past. Maybe those engaged in asinine reminiscence would like to remember our scores of 120 odd and 99 against India and Pakistan in the 1988 Wills Asia Cup and our gargantuan team effort of 120 runs against a modest Deccan Blues team and their unimpressive total of 175 in 1982.

It is okay to be angry at our team. They are after all our boys. But the dream that they work for is a dream that we all share. And it is a dream that must perpetuate. For the day we stop dreaming is the day we stop achieving. The hope must remain. And hoping does not mean finding scapegoats and slaughtering the boys whenever we fail. For there will be failures, many more before we can succeed. We should not let that turn our dream into a melee of pointed fingers.

Each quarter in Bangladesh, the players, writers, coaches and officials need to look within themselves and set right what they have been doing wrong. For they are in charge of the hopes of a nation. They are in charge of something that is too big to ensure in a mire of useless criticism. Cricket in Bangladesh needs dreamers and workers. It cannot afford destructive critiques.

Good luck to our boys on the glorious mission that lies ahead of them. Success may not be there. But their hearts should be. For a collective heart of 130 million people is beating with theirs.

No Lara at Lara's ground!

EDGBASTON, England, May 10: Brian Lara was left to ponder over the good old days here on Monday as fitness worries surrounding the West Indian captain continued before the cricket World Cup, reports AFP.

Lara, nursing a four-week wrist injury and desperately short of practice in English conditions, was left on the sidelines as his side took on Warwickshire in a practice match - at the very ground where he scored a world record first-class score of 501 not out for the county in 1994.

The 30-year-old Trinidadian has refused to discuss his injury. "Ask the doctors," he said.

West Indies coach Clive Lloyd had been hoping Lara might start Monday's game. His last chance of meaningful practice before the tournament will come against Surrey on Wednesday.

The West Indies begin their Cup campaign against Pakistan on Sunday.

Lara's injury is all the more worrying in that it comes just after the left-hander had rediscovered his best form after a 12-month slump.

He scored consecutive innings of 213, 153 not out and 100 in the drawn home series against Australia in March before getting hurt.

It was at Edgbaston five years ago that Lara, fresh from hitting a world record Test score of 375 against England in Antigua, had turned out for Warwickshire against Durham in an English county match and made history again, his 501 coming in a run of seven centuries in eight first-class matches.

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SHOWER THE SPOILER: Rain water creates puddles on top of the pitch cover at Durham where Pakistan's warm-up game was abandoned yesterday. —AFP photo

S Africa, Lanka coast

LONDON, May 10 (Reuters/AFP) - Favourites South Africa signalled their intent for the forthcoming World Cup by trouncing English county side Kent by 170 runs in a warm-up match on Sunday.

Unlike the first two rounds of practice matches over the previous two days when most fell foul of the weather, all but one of the games was completed. Only the match between India and Yorkshire was abandoned because of an unfit pitch after rain seeped under the covers overnight.

South Africa also showed their hand in their batting lineup, promoting wicketkeeper Mark Boucher to open with considerable success as they made 320 for six in their 50 overs.

Boucher slammed an explosive 129 from 114 balls, with two sixes and 14 fours, and shared in century stands with Jacques Kallis (46) and Lance Klusener (58) before falling to the penultimate ball of the innings.

South African captain Hansie Cronje then destroyed the Kent middle order with a spell of four wickets for six runs in 15 balls as the home side slipped from 114 for four to 125 for nine and they were finally dismissed for 150.

Cronje said it had been a "mainly satisfactory outing".

South Africa play Middlesex in their third practice match on Tuesday, before taking on India in their first Cup game at Hove on Saturday.

Holders Sri Lanka also had a comfortable win, beating Nottinghamshire by 62 runs at Trent Bridge as Roshan Mahanama made a brilliant 142 not out.

With Aravinda de Silva adding a bright 66, Sri Lanka totalled 288 for five before dismissing Nottinghamshire for 226 in 49.1 overs.

Sri Lanka's pace pair of Chaminda Vaas and Pramodya Wickremasinghe each took four wickets.

Outsiders Kenya boosted their moral ahead of their opening World Cup match against Zimbabwe on Saturday with a thrilling last over win against Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire set a challenging target by scoring 249 for six with former England wicketkeeper Jack Russell hitting 30 but the home side were pegged back by a magnificent fast-medium bowling spell by Mar-

tin Suji who took six for 20 from his 10 overs.

He was well supported by off-spinner Steve Tikolo who took three for 42.

Kenya replied with an opening partnership of 88 by wicketkeeper Kennedy Otieno (68) and Ravindu Shah (50) and then Maurice Odumbe hit 68 before being run out. But Kenya were always up with the run rate and won by four wickets with five balls to spare.

Zimbabwe, their opponents next Saturday, fared less well, beaten by five wickets by Derbyshire after being dismissed for 178 in 49.3 overs.

Neil Johnson (31) and Grant Flower (28) gave the visitors a sound start but thereafter wickets fell at regular intervals.

England also went close to defeat before beating Essex by one run.

Defending a modest total of 229 for seven, England looked in deep trouble as Nasser Hussain (82) and Stuart Law (64) combined in a century partnership.

But then medium pacer Mark Ealham struck with his second spell, taking four wickets for nine runs and Essex ended on 228 for nine.

England owed their total largely to another fine innings by Graham Thorpe who hit 88 from 127 balls after they had been in deep trouble at 29 for three.

Changed Champs?



DULEEP MENDIS

Birkenshaw will be relishing the chance to pit his wits against Sri Lanka as they complete their preparations for their opening World Cup match against England.

The Grace Road clash is arguably the pick of the penultimate round of warm-up matches before the tournament proper starts when England play the defending champions at Lord's on Friday.

Birkenshaw, who has masterminded Leicestershire's two County Championship successes in three years, is a great admirer of the Sri Lankans and reckons this is the perfect opportunity for his men to prove themselves.

He said: "We will just be glad to get a game of cricket, especially against a side like Sri Lanka who are strong in all departments. They have a very positive approach to the game and they have some super cricketers."

Leicestershire's attack will be depleted by the absence of Chris Lewis and Mike Kasprowicz while wicketkeeper Paul Nixon will undergo a test on a thumb injury, although the county will be strengthened by the experience of a pre-season tour to Sri Lanka earlier this year.

The Sri Lankans, taking advantage of the slow wickets in the Indian sub-continent during the last World Cup, ran up scores of 100-plus in the first 15 overs when field restrictions were in force.

Their top-order batsmen, left-hander Samath Jayasuriya, Ramesh Kulawitharana and Aravinda De Silva, were encouraged to attack from the start and regularly seized the initiative before the opposition had even warmed up.

The cold, seaming conditions of England, however, have prompted a rethink for Arjuna Ranatunga's men, with batsmen urged to take fewer risks early on before going for their strokes.

Meanwhile, the experienced Roshan Mahanama could get a further chance to press his claims for a place in the World Cup.

He returned to the side with an unbeaten 142 off 145 balls in yesterday's warm-up against Nottinghamshire and will hope for more valuable practice when Sri Lanka take on Leicestershire at Grace Road tomorrow.

Mahanama only got his chance to play yesterday after Kaluwitharana suffered a neck injury.

Leicestershire coach Jack

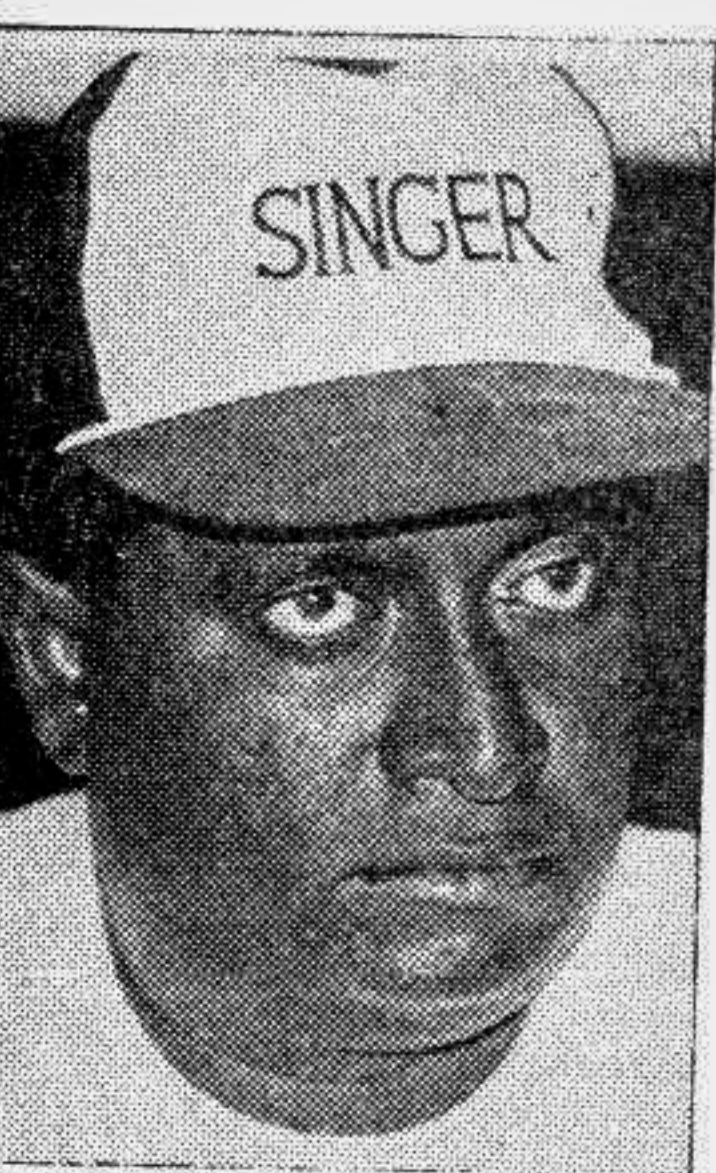
Cristina claims

Warsaw Cup

WARSAW, May 10: Spain's Cristina Torrens-Valero, the world number 81, beat Argentina's Ines Gorrochategui 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) to capture the 112,500-dollar Warsaw Cup here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Torrens-Valero earned 16,000 dollars and 80 ranking points for her first every victory on the Tour.

"I am very happy," she said after the match. "Particularly as I was not one of the favourites for the tournament."



DONALD

Donald getting there

CANTERBURY, England, May 10: South African pace bowler Allan Donald is rediscovering his rhythm just in time for the World Cup after a long spell of injury, his captain Hansie Cronje said on Monday, reports AFP.

Donald has been out with a wrenched stomach muscle since March but got through six overs in a practice match against Kent on Sunday, taking one for 20.

A cautiously optimistic Cronje said: "He is a rhythm bowler and needs more work."

"He struggled a bit bowling down the hill but he's had a good work-out this weekend. I was happy with the way he bowled."

The 32-year-old Donald, nicknamed "White Lightning", is a key member of the South African attack although he rarely opens the bowling in one-dayers, preferring to come on as first change as the ball begins to swing less.

There have been injury concerns over him in recent months, however. He injured a hamstring in December against the West Indies, then hurt himself against New Zealand at the start of the year.

South Africa conclude their warm-up programme on Tuesday with a game against Middlesex. Their World Cup programme begins on Saturday against India at Hove.

Hard-hitting West Indies opener Ridley Jacobs whacking the Warwickshire bowling during his enterprising half century at Edgbaston yesterday. —AFP photo

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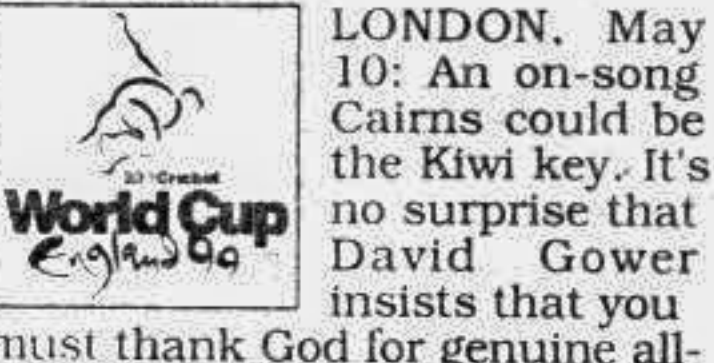
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Cairns: Born to hit big



CHRIS CAIRNS

LONDON, May 10: An on-song Cairns could be the Kiwi key. It's no surprise that David Gower insists that you must thank God for genuine all-rounders, says a report on Internet.

And New Zealand leader Stephen Fleming has plenty of gratitude that he will have such a commodity at his disposal during the World Cup - none other than the muscular-hitting, sharp-bowling Chris Cairns.

Cairns, 28, had three spells at Nottinghamshire but will deliver his first ball in England in Kiwi colours in their opening match against Bangladesh at Chelmsford. Contrastingly his father, Lance, played six of his 43 Tests in this country.

Gower, who played plenty of cricket against Cairns senior, believes that if Cairns junior hits the right form note, he could play a vital role in the tournament.

"At his best, Chris is a match-winner," said Gower. "He's brisk with the ball - brisker than his father, and has a nice action. And if he bats well, he's a kind of an Ian Botham; a big-hitter and a fluent stroke-maker."

"When you look at who is going to make a difference to a side, you look at the all-rounder because it solves two problems in one. You don't have the problem of shall-we-pick-a-batter-who-bowls-a-bit or the reverse."

New Zealand had a wonder-



CHRIS CAIRNS

ful World Cup eight years ago, and lost to Pakistan in the semi-final. Their strength has always been unity and team spirit."

For all his talent, Cairns has been something of a one-day under-achiever, and probably because of injuries, and his bowling may not be as effective as it once was.

But his batting can be explosive and is capable of turning a game in a few overs. Perhaps Cairns is peaking at the right time. He posted the second of his two one-day international hundreds - he has a dozen 50s

against India (115) in Christchurch in late January.

And Cairns will surely back himself to reach a century of wickets in the tournament. "Sheep", as he was known to his team-mates at Trent Bridge, is half-a-dozen dismissals away from that target.

Six summers in county cricket will give Cairns the ideal experience of early-season conditions in England, which will be a plus for New Zealand.

He was due to be Notts' overseas player again in 1997, but a chipped ankle bone forced him out of the entire season, and his fellow-countryman Nathan Aspinall - himself a cavalier batsman - filled the breach.

Since making his debut against Australia in Perth when only 19, his career has been disrupted by a succession of injuries and operations, but hopefully the worst is behind him.

"I have consolidated my place at number six and I bowl in short, quick spells, to get wickets at crucial times," said Cairns of his role. "In England you play a lot of intense cricket and you experience so many different situations. You can only learn from them."

"My father was a more of a basher down the order, who bowled medium-paced inswingers. I bat up the order and bowl quick. The only similarity we have is our ability to hit sixes."

Expect a fit and ambitious Cairns to give the ball a mother-and-father of all whacks during World Cup '99.

Mustaq mock at hosts



MUSHTAQ

Pakistan are tipped by many, including former England fast bowler Freddie Trueman, to add another World Cup to their 1992 title.

They are drawn in a separate preliminary group from England but the teams could meet in the second stage of the tournament, which begins on Friday.

Mushtaq's comments may appear undiplomatic, but some of the British media share his views. The Observer newspaper on