

WC tickets in India kicks up a row

INTERNET, London

Organisers of the 2003 World Cup have threatened to take back tickets from companies that have been caught giving them away without permission.

Cricket World Cup (CWC) has accused firms in India of "ambush marketing" by off-loading tickets as competition prizes.

CWC executive director Dr Ali Bacher has written to the companies involved threatening not to send them their tickets unless they can assure him they will not be given away without written consent.

Any cancelled ticket packages will be re-sold to other companies in time for the tournament, that will be held in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya from February 9 next year.

"We believe that the companies involved will co-operate with us and we look forward to welcoming a great many Indian tourists to South Africa."

"It is extremely important that people only purchase CWC packages through the authorised travel agents," Bacher said.

ICC appreciates BCCI initiative

REUTERS, London

International Cricket Council (ICC) president Malcolm Gray has said Indian fans need an assurance that their best side will be present at next year's World Cup in southern Africa.

In a statement on Saturday, Gray welcomed a decision by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to call an emergency meeting next Wednesday over a contracts crisis involving several of their leading players.

The BCCI has asked the ICC for more concessions on the period during which individual sponsorship deals clashing with official World Cup sponsors are frozen.

"For Indian cricket supporters, I can't imagine anything more important than knowing that their best team will be at the World Cup next year and I think it is important for them to understand how the BCCI is going about making sure that this can happen," Gray said.

"An emergency special general meeting of the BCCI to deal with the Indian Board's contract crisis is a welcome step in the right direction and an indication that the BCCI recognises the seriousness of the contractual commitments it has undertaken."

Mukesh lifts

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Zai Kippen came in third with 283 while Vivek Bhandari finished two strokes behind Zai for a fourth finish. Local pro Mohammed Ismail, Delhi lad Naman Dawar, veteran Shiv Prakash and Ashok Kumar were joint fifth.

Siddiqur Rahman won the amateur title with a tally of one-over 289 and finished joint 11th alongside Vijay Kumar of India.

Top pro scores after 72 holes: 274-Mukesh Kumar (72.65,69,68); 279-Digvijay Singh (69,71,66,73); 283-Zai Kippen (70,72,67,74); 285-Vivek Bhandari (72,69,74,70); 286-Mohd Ismail (70,69,76,71); Naman Dawar (70,70,74,72); Shiv Prakash (70,74,68,74); Ashok Kumar (71,70,70,75); 287-Feroz Ali (70,75,73,69); 288-Rafiq Ali (73,73,72,70); 289-Vijay Kumar (72,71,76,70).

Amateurs: 289-Siddiq-ur Rahman (70,71,74,74); 298-Mohd Sayyum (72,77,73,76); 300 Mohd Milon (83,72,74,71).

BD-Sporting

FROM PAGE 13

The SAFF championship involving eight teams commences in Dhaka on January 10.

Bangladesh will then travel to Bhutan tonight to feature in an invitational tournament from the quarterfinal stage. They will play their quarterfinal match on December 25. The semifinals and final of the meet will be held on December 27 and 29 respectively.

The national team will return home on December 31 if Bangladesh reach the final of the meet.

Bangladesh are desperately looking forward to challenging India's dominance in the regional football. India won the second edition of the SAFF championship, defeating Bangladesh in the final in Goa two years ago.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is now focusing on getting the tournament in order after uncertainty gripped the meet when the National Sports Council (NSC) asked the organisers not to damage all the cricket pitches at the BNS by setting the field at middle of the big bowl. The crisis was over when the initially adamant BFF caved in to the NSC pressure.

"We are now preparing the ground in consultation with the BCB. Matches will be held exactly where the league games were played and by doing so two adjoining cricket pitches will be unaffected," said BFF assistant general secretary Badal Roy.

Under-cloud players

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

INTERNET, undated

Several star players are struggling to shake off injuries in time for the World Cup. Following is an assessment of the major injury doubts and the chances of those players appearing in the sport's biggest tournament:

AUSTRALIA

Shane Warne is a major worry after dislocating his shoulder in the triangular one-day series match against England on Sunday at Melbourne.

Examination revealed the injury was not as bad as first feared and Warne could feasibly be fit in time for the start of the World Cup.

However, leg-spinners rely more than any other bowler on their bowling shoulder and such an injury must make him a major doubt to fully participate.

ENGLAND

Michael Vaughan is expected to return for the Boxing Day Test match against Australia but a series of minor injuries have put him under a cloud.

Ashley Giles' broken wrist has already ruled him out of the Test series against Australia and the player himself is wondering whether he will be called back into the one-day squad in January.

Although his injury will have

healed by the World Cup, others have been given a chance to shine in his absence.

Jeremy Snape is in the same situation as Giles, missing out on the VB series with a broken thumb. He could well miss out on a trip to Africa.

Andrew Flintoff's injury problems have perplexed the England management with the all-rounder failing to recover from hernia surgery as quickly as expected.

He is now undergoing an extensive rehabilitation programme and is almost certain to be selected in England's final 15 for the World Cup.

NEW ZEALAND

If the Black Caps are to have any chance of winning the World Cup then a fully-fit Chris Cairns will be vital.

The all-rounder has been plagued by knee problems over the past two years and his latest comeback for the one-dayers against New Zealand has been put back until mid-series.

Like Flintoff for England, Cairns is likely to be selected for New Zealand's final squad but he will be short of match practice and his past record suggests he is not certain to make it through the tournament.

PAKISTAN

The star of the 1999 World Cup, Shoaib Akhtar, is causing concern for Pakistan.

Shoaib will miss the upcoming Test series against South Africa after suffering a recurrence of a

longstanding knee problem.

His departure from the series is precautionary with the Pakistan management still optimistic that Shoaib will be firing on all cylinders come March.

SRI LANKA

As their heavy defeat to an under-strength England team in the VB Series proved, the Sri Lankan attack can seem toothless without star man Muttiah Muralitharan.

Murali is currently recuperating from a hernia operation and is expected to return for the second half of the VB Series in Australia.

However, Flintoff's elongated recovery from a similar problem proves that these matters do not always resolve themselves as expected and this is Murali's second major injury of the year.

WEST INDIES

The West Indian youngsters performed miracles in India in overturning their opponents on home soil without their two most experienced batsmen.

Captain Carl Hooper is recovering from an operation to clean-up his knee and seems to be in line to return to lead the side.

However, Brian Lara still remains under a cloud having yet to return from his rest following a bout of hepatitis.

Lara will be desperately short of match practice come the World Cup but his genius is such, that it is unlikely the selectors will leave him at home.



Scene from the ninth round of the First Division Chess League at the National Sports Council chess room yesterday.

Fading Asians!

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Pakistan confounded the expectations of neutral observers by lifting the World Cup in Australia in 1992.

But Asian cricket fans must be fearing the worst ahead of the World Cup, with India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka appearing to have lost form at the worst possible time.

India were being hailed as strong contenders to lift the trophy after beating England in July's NatWest Trophy tournament and reaching the aborted ICC Champions Trophy final in September.

The emergence of Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh and Mohammad Kaif seemed to signal an embarrassment of batting riches unrivalled by any other country.

But the acclaim proved to be short-lived as India were beaten 4-3 in a home series against the unfancied West Indies last month.

The loss highlighted just how much they rely on individual key players, particularly star batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who was out

injured. And it left coach John Wright bemoaning the lack of a world class seam bowling all-rounder in the mould of Kapil Dev.

Their final preparations before the tournament are already coming unstuck on the damp green-top wickets in New Zealand, in the Test matches that precede the one-day series.

India fared badly in their last one-day tournament in South Africa, losing to the hosts in the final and against Kenya in the qualifying stages of the triangular series in October 2001.

Recent results will not persuade their millions of fans that things will be any different in February and March next year.

Sri Lanka, who faced India in the Champions Trophy final, look even less likely to make an impact in South Africa.

They lifted the World Cup after playing in familiar conditions in 1996, but are notoriously bad travellers, particularly on fast, bouncy wickets.

They were thrashed 4-1 in a limited-overs series when they visited South Africa in December,

and were completely out-played in the first two matches of the VB Series against England in Australia.

Sri Lanka are more than a one-man team, but their over-reliance on star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan has been blamed in some quarters for hindering their progress.

Pakistan are the Asian side best equipped to fare well on the alien pitches.

They mastered similar conditions in Australia during their World Cup winning year of 1992.

Fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis give them the firepower that India and Sri Lanka can only dream about, but they remain as enigmatic as ever.

Fresh from hammering Zimbabwe 5-0, the near full-strength Pakistan side suffered a 4-1 reverse in the one-day series in South Africa earlier this month.

Form, of course, can be temporary, and all three sides have undoubted class.

But expectations of an Asian side lifting the World Cup next year may have receded a little in the last six weeks, even amongst their own fans.

Biman lead increases

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman stretched their lead at the top of the First Division Chess League table when they crushed Mohakhali Prodig Sangha in the ninth round yesterday.

After a rest day, GM Ziaur Rahman beat Enayet Hossain, IM Reefat-Bin-Sattar defeated Din Mohammad, IM Abdullah-Al-Rakib won against Sohel Chowdhury and IM Enamul Hossain was too strong for Shamim Khan.

They have collected 35.5 points compared to second-placed Titas who have 27.5 points. Titas thrashed Farshaganj Sporting Club 3.5-0.5.

In other matches, Leonine Chess Club beat Sonali Bank 2.5-1.5, Anushillan Daba Krira Chakra beat Anu Memorial Club 3-1, Bangshal Progoti Samaj Kalyan Sangstha beat Monipur Chess Club 2.5-1.5 and Dhaka University Chess Team beat Nakhalpara Jubo Kalyan Sangha 2.5-1.5 points.

Narayanganj City Club drew with Anirban Chess School.

Cricket practice

UNB, Dhaka

The cricket academy established by Minhazul Abedin and Shahidul Alam Ratan, is going to arrange practice sessions for the players of the Premier, First and Second Division leagues.

The session will begin on December 28 at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on cement and turf wickets.

Kurigram cricket

UNB, Dhaka

Renaissance Club made a flying start in the Kurigram Second Division Cricket League thrashing UCC by ten wickets in the inaugural match at the local stadium yesterday.

Batting first, UCC scored 58 runs in 21.3 overs while Renaissance Club raced to 62 in 8.1 overs.

Quazi Abdul Alim Bridge from Dec 25

PRESS RELEASE

The prestigious Quazi Abdul Alim Memorial Trophy organised by the Dhaka Metropolitan Bridge Association begins on December 25 at the Bangladesh Bank Club premises at 10 am.

Interested pairs have been asked to confirm their entry by 9:30 am on the opening day of the three-day meet.

Pakistan call up Akbar

REUTERS, Karachi

Injury-hit Pakistan have called up Fazle Akbar to strengthen their pace bowling resources for the test series against South Africa beginning in Durban on Thursday.

"The team management have requested for back-up after an injury to Mohammad Sami," Pakistan Cricket Board spokesman Samiul Hasan told this news agency on Saturday.

Hasan said the 23-year-old Fazle Akbar, who last played for Pakistan in a 2001 tournament in England, would fly to South Africa later on Saturday.

Pakistan are already without fast bowlers Wasim Akram, who opted out of the test series to rest before the World Cup, and Shoaib Akhtar who has been sent home for treatment on his knees.

Ricky isn't worried

REUTERS/AFP, Perth

Australia batsman Ricky Ponting believes England's two limited-overs wins over Sri Lanka will not save the tourists from another heavy defeat in the fourth Ashes Test which starts on Thursday.

Ponting told reporters on Saturday that, while England's victories in the Victoria Bitter triangular one-day series will have given them something to celebrate, things will be different when the Tests resume.

"There is no doubt that, when the Test match comes around in a few days, they will be feeling the pressure again," Ponting said.

Waqar Pakistan

FROM PAGE 13

General Tauqir Zia told reporters. The announcement put to rest lingering and widespread speculation over who would lead Pakistan in the quadrennial event.

Pakistan is among the teams favoured to win the championship in southern Africa.

Media reports in Pakistan suggested Waqar would be demoted after the team's dismal 4-1 loss in the one-day series to South Africa which ended earlier this week.

Veteran pacer Wasim Akram was tipped to take over and to challenge a match-fixing inquiry's recommendation that he should be barred from leading the team.

"Since Waqar has retained his form and fitness he would continue to lead. If, God forbid, he sustains an injury then as options we have Rashid Latif, Inzamamul Haq and Wasim," Zia said.

Zia was speaking after a ceremony outside Rawalpindi to unveil the Cup trophy, which was brought to Pakistan on a sponsored tour.

The eighth World Cup takes place in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya next February and March.

Batters to blame

Cricket

AFP, Hamilton

New Zealand coach Denis Aberhart on Saturday blamed his team's batting rather than the pitch after the Kiwis were bowled out for their lowest total against India in the second and final cricket Test here.

New Zealand were shot out for 94 in the first innings in reply to their rivals' 99 on the third day at the Westpac Park.

Their previous lowest total against India in 42 Tests was 100 at Wellington in 1980-81.

India were all out for 154 in their second innings as 22 wickets fell on a dramatic day.

"The pitch was not easy to bat on, but I don't think it was that bad,"

said Aberhart. "I think it was poor batting by both sides. I'm personally disappointed with our team's batting."

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Waugh's Warne-ing

FROM PAGE 13

spell of 3-16, but wasn't used on Saturday as the Victorians cruised to an outright victory inside three days.

However, Waugh believes MacGill's record in Test cricket -- he's taken 82 wickets in 17 matches -- should count in his favour when the selectors announce the side for the Boxing Day Test on Sunday.

"He's a quality bowler. I have gone on record that he's in the top couple of spinners in the world," Waugh said on Saturday.

"It's up to the selectors now whether they decide he's the next one to be picked or it's Nathan Hauritz or Brad Hogg or whoever else is turning the ball in Australia."

"He's a quality bowler. He's done well at Test cricket."

Waugh rejected suggestions Australia should replace Warne with a pace bowler despite the success of speed on the Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch this (southern) summer.

"I think for the balance of any attack you're better off playing a spinner than a four-pronged pace attack, unless you're the West Indies of the 70s and 80s and they had four outstanding quicks," Waugh said.

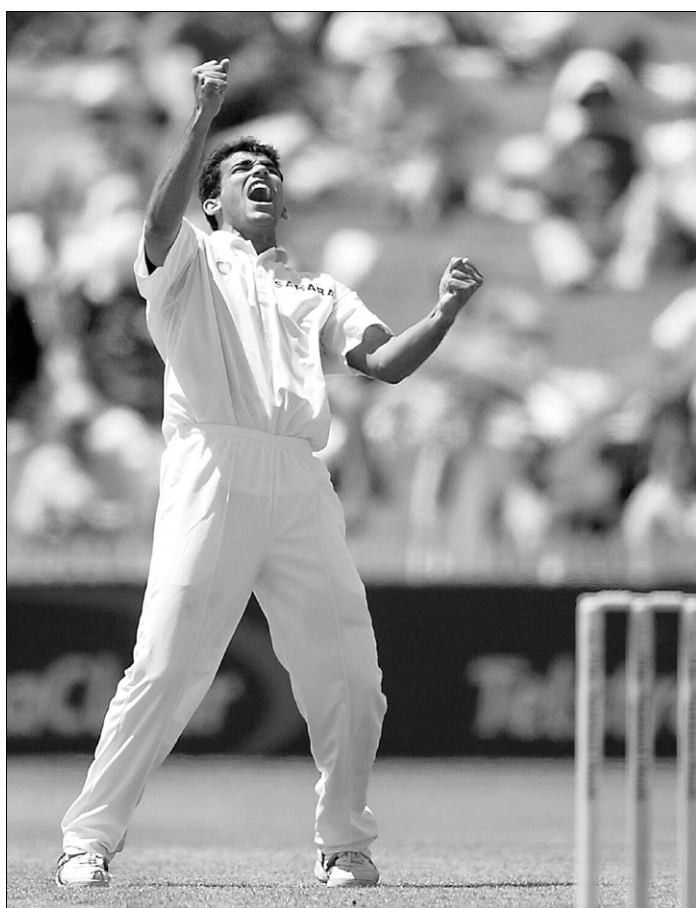
"But I think for the balance of the side and to give you options on day four or five you're better off having a spinner there."

Ponting also voiced his support for MacGill, but qualified it by giving a strong appraisal of West Australian Hogg.

"I think Stewy (MacGill) would have to be the favorite, because his record in Test cricket speaks for itself -- it is outstanding," Ponting said.

"But Hogg has performed extremely well, not only in one-day cricket, but in four-day cricket for Western Australia over the past couple of seasons."

"I have faced him in the nets, and he is certainly bowling well, and he is a more than capable batsman."



India paceman Zaheer Khan, who took five wickets, shouts for joy after dismissing Mark Richardson of New Zealand yesterday.

Hamilton buries

FROM PAGE 13

Bowler O M R W
Bond 14.2 7 39 4
Tuffey 9 6 12 4
Oram 10 1 22 2
Styris 2 0 10 0
Astle 3 2 4 0

NEW ZEALAND: First innings
Richardson lbw b Zaheer 13
Vincent c Dravid b Zaheer 3
Fleming c and b Zaheer 21
McMillan c Dravid b Nehra 4
Astle c Harbhajan b Nehra 0
Styris lbw b Harbhajan 13
Oram c Tendulkar b Harbhajan 3
Hart lbw b Zaheer 3
Vettori c Laxman b Zaheer 6
Tuffey run out 13
Bond not out 0
Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-10) 15
Total: (All out in 38.2 overs) 94
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-39, 3-47, 4-48, 5-60, 6-64, 7-69, 8-79, 9-94

Bowler O M R W
Zaheer 13.2 4 29 5
Yohannan 9 4 16 0
Nehra 8 3 20 2
Bangar 2 1 4 0
Harbhajan 6 0 20 2

INDIA: Second innings
Bangar c and b Tuffey 7
Patel b Tuffey 0
Dravid c sub (Mason) b Oram 39
Tendulkar b Tuffey 32
Ganguly c Hart b Oram 5
Laxman b Astle 4
Sehwag c Tuffey b Bond 25
Harbhajan c Hart b Oram 18
Zaheer c Astle b Tuffey 0
Nehra c Hart b Oram 10
Yohannan not out 8
Extras: (lb-1, nb-3, w-2) 6
Total: (All out in 43.5 overs) 154
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-7, 3-57, 4-64, 5-85, 6-110, 7-130, 8-131, 9-136

Bowler O M R W
Bond 10 0 58 1
Tuffey 16 3 41 4
Oram 12.5 2 41 4
Astle 5 1 13 1

NEW ZEALAND: Second innings
Richardson not out 18
Vincent not out 6
Total: (For no loss in 15 overs) 24
Bowler O M R W
Zaheer 5 0 12 0
Yohannan 7 3 7 0
Nehra 3 1 5 0
Umpires: Asoka de Silva (Sri Lanka) and Daryl Harper (Australia).

Small supports Brit politicians

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

INTERNET, London

Former England bowler Gladstone Small believes the current side should refuse to travel to Zimbabwe for the World Cup next year.

Small told BBC that allowing the African country to hold World Cup fixtures would send out false signals of support for the policies of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

Small, a key figure in the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA), said he would urge players not to support the International Cricket Council's decision to give Zimbabwe the green light.

The PCA has asked the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to provide England players with more information on the situation after the decision.

"Sometimes we need to look at the wider issues and not hide behind the excuse that politics shouldn't get in the way of sport," Small said.

"We need to look at the consequences of our actions and think about who's involved."

England captain Nasser Hussain has said he will play in Zimbabwe if the ECB deems it safe, but Small

said that should not stop players deciding to boycott the trip.

"The cricket authorities have made their decision -- it now comes down to individual players," he said.

At least one senior player in the Zimbabwe side is believed