

ICC defends minnows' inclusion

CRICINFO, undated

Reacting to heavy criticism by Ricky Ponting, among other players and officials, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has defended the inclusion of weaker teams on the international circuit.

Before and after the buffing Australia gave USA, Ponting said that neither team gained much from such one-sided encounters.

But Brendan McClements, a spokesperson for the ICC, disagreed with the view, saying that the exposure was vital for weaker teams and that, in any case, they were scheduled to play more matches until the 2007 World Cup.

"I think it's important those countries are able to aspire to and test themselves against that level," AAP quoted McClements as saying. "We have restructured the tournaments for our associate members over the last two years and over the next two years we'll see them take place as we get towards the World Cup in 2007."

"They will get a lot of cricket among themselves that will improve their cricket and there will also be some targetted funding toward the higher performing associate members. So I think as this structure takes root over the next two years we'll see the benefits of that by the time we get to the 2007 World Cup."

Barlow bemoans

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Barlow, who had prepared a fantastic development programme during his short 1999-2000 period as director of coaching, stressed that Bangladesh should improve their domestic structure to make a mark in international cricket.

"There is no alternative to having a good domestic structure."

A U S - N ZEALAND

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Lehmann 5 0 16 1
AUSTRALIA: Hayden, Gilchrist, Ponting, Lehmann, Symonds, Martyn, Clarke, Watson, Kasproutz, Gillespie, McGrath.
Toss: Australia.
Umpires: Steve Bucknor (West Indies) and Rudi Koertzen (South Africa).

Pakistan ready

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one-day internationals in 18 months.

"With the scenario we have in Kenya, with a lack of games, we can't feel optimistic anymore," said Tikolo who helped his team to the World Cup semifinals last year.

"It's been a disappointing series but this we'll keep on happening if we don't play more. Our next fixture against the major teams is the 2006 ICC Trophy. There is no silver lining. "After the World Cup we thought we'd get more games but obviously nothing happened but we did miss an opportunity today to show we can play well."

Kenya, however, do have an Inter-Continental Cup (the four-day competition for internationals teams outside the Test elite) in October against Namibia with the winners going forward to the semifinals in Sharjah.

Meanwhile Tikolo said Kenya had missed Maurice Odumbe after the all-rounder was given a five-year ban last month after being found guilty of taking bribes.

"We are missing Maurice as a player. He was an integral part of the team as both a batsman and a bowler. To fill the gap he left will not be easy. But as a team we were focused on this tournament."

'Aussie series at stake'



AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket chiefs went into an emergency huddle Thursday amid fears next month's home series against world champions Australia will be cancelled if a television rights imbroglio is not resolved.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), meeting in Calcutta, was debating a court order which prevents it from seeking fresh bids for rights to the Australian series until the legal dispute between rival networks, Zee and ESPN-STAR Sports, is settled.

ESPN-Star, jointly owned by Disney and Rupert Murdoch, has challenged BCCI's decision to award TV rights for all international cricket played in the country for the next four years to Zee for 308 million dollars.

ESPN-Star contended in the Bombay High Court that Zee, India's largest listed media company, did not fulfil a requirement to have two years' experience of telecasting international cricket matches.

The court, which has put off hearings till September 21, wants the BCCI to maintain the status quo till it reaches a verdict.

With the high-profile series

against Australia less than three weeks way -- the first of four Tests begins in Bangalore on October 6 -- the BCCI maintains the court's decision is untenable.

BCCI lawyer Virendra Tulzapurkar told a hearing Wednesday that if the matches were not telecast, "there is every likelihood that not only will the entire series be cancelled with the possibility of penal measures, but also that the same is likely to cause serious international repercussions."

The court ordered status quo following media reports that the BCCI was negotiating with public broadcaster Doordarshan.

"Time is running out and we are desperate," a senior BCCI functionary told AFP.

"There is no guarantee that even if the court gives an early ruling, it will not be challenged by the losing party in a higher court. The case could go on for months."

The official, who did not want to be identified, said there were serious concerns about the Australian series.

"It is mandatory that third-umpire coverage is made available for the Tests," he said.

"If this is not done, anything can happen. Official status for the series may be withdrawn, the International

Cricket Council may not post three umpires or referees and more punitive action may be taken.

"The game is first and then the money. Broadcasters and telecasters cannot dictate all the time."

Zee had initially bid 260 million dollars for the deal. But when ESPN-Star upped its offer from 230 million dollars to 308 million dollars, Zee matched that amount and was granted the rights on the basis that it had initially been the highest bidder.

Zee's offer represented a six-fold increase on the 54 million dollars paid by Doordarshan for the past four years, and dwarfed even the Indian government's annual sports budget of 44 million dollars.

The standoff has left fans both bemused and angry.

"People usually went to court to recover lost dues, but here they are fighting to pay up 308 million dollars. It is insane," said chartered accountant Pankaj Agrawal.

Another critic wondered why the BCCI had delayed calling for fresh bids till August when it knew four years ago that Doordarshan's tenure would end before the start of the 2004-2005 season.

"We may be deprived of watching good cricket because the BCCI is so unprofessional," said Shantanu Chatterjee.

School b'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

The AKTEL school basketball tournament resumed at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday after a three-day break due to inclement weather.

Raja enjoyed a scoring feast when he shot 45 points to steer Green Herald to a cakewalk 108-17 win over Sunnydale in the boys' competition.

South Breeze recorded a 37-21 victory against Udayan High School while Bangladesh International Tutorial beat Scholastica 50-42.

In the day's most tight finish, St Nicholas School snatched a 42-41 win over Sunbeams. Diberly and Subrata scored 17 and 11 points respectively for the winners while Sahbab caged 17 for Sunbeams.

Seeds stumble

AFP, Bali

The big names at the Bali WTA tennis tournament endured a wretched day here on Wednesday as three of the top players bowed out to lower-ranked opposition.

Japanese third seed Ai Sugiyama fell at the first hurdle along with America's fifth-seeded Chanda Rubin and Jelena Jankovic, the eighth seed from Serbia and Montenegro.

"It was pathetic," said a disgusted Sugiyama after her defeat to compatriot Aoki Nakamura, nine years her junior and 151 places below her in the world rankings, at the 225,000-dollar Wismilak International.

"She takes the ball really early and she is attacking very well ... I should have performed well but it is not the best conditions for me."

Italy's Tathiana Garbin, ranked 59th in the world, had US star Rubin packing her bags after a whirlwind encounter which ended 6-1, 6-4.

"She played better than me, that is the most important thing," Rubin said after her error-strwn performance.

Meanwhile a fatigued Jankovic lost out 6-4, 2-6, 2-6 to home favourite Angelique Widjaja of Indonesia.

"In the second and third sets I saw she was tired. In fact I was tired too but pretended not to be," Widjaja said.

The upsets continued for South Korea's Yoon Jeong Cho, who beat Venezuelan sixth seed Maria Vento-Kabchi in the first round, as she took out Puerto Rico's 46th-ranked played Kristina Brandi 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

In the day's other second-round match, seventh seed Gisela Dulko of Argentina recovered from losing the first set to beat emotional Italian Flavia Pennetta 4-6, 6-1, 7-5.

In the doubles, newly crowned US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia and Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario defeated Marta Domachowska of Poland and Russia's Galina Voskoboeva 6-4, 6-3.

What more

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When asked about Bangladesh's failure in familiar condition in the subcontinent during the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka, the coach was brief in his reply.

"It can happen sometimes," he said.

The Australian was also uninterested to explain the inclusion of Khaled Mahmud at the last moment for the game against the West Indies, which came as a surprise as he had earlier hinted at fielding the same eleven that played against South Africa.

"Mahmud was included because we wanted an extra pacer. He did very well, especially with the bat but he was unlucky with the ball as a couple of catches were dropped," he added.

The English journalists then focused their attention on Bangladesh captain Rajin Saleh but the 21-year-old declined to say anything on the subject.

Whatmore, however, quickly came to Saleh's rescue saying: "He made a painful start but I think he was terrific on the field as a captain. I believe one day he will lead Bangladesh from the front.

Ferrero, Paradorn proceed



AFP, Beijing

Second seed Juan Carlos Ferrero and Asian favourite Paradorn Srichaphan moved into the second round of the rain-hit 500,000-dollar China Open with easy victories on Wednesday.

Ferrero, still struggling for fitness after a disappointing season, overcame four double-faults in one game and three brief rain breaks to see off 256th-ranked American Justin Gimelstob 6-4, 6-1.

Two forehand errors from the American sealed the match for Ferrero as he bids for his second Asian title after winning in Hong Kong's Salem Open in 2002.

The Spaniard, last year's US Open finalist who fell in the second round this time around, spent an hour in the treatment room after his win.

"It's been a frustrating season, it's been impossible for me to play normal tennis with my various injuries. But now I'm feeling good, I'm happy to try and regain my level once again," said Ferrero, who has battled chicken pox, rib injury and a persistent adductor muscle problem this year.

"I need to restore my confidence and I'm hoping to return to top form. Right now, I'm playing at 85 or 90 percent fitness."

Meanwhile Paradorn, Asia's top-ranked player and the sixth seed here, won the last three games of the second set as he rallied from 3-5 down to beat Frenchman Jean-Rene Lisnard 6-4, 7-5.

"I knew that I would have a chance to win in straight sets," said Paradorn, who improved his record to 2-0 over Lisnard.

"I'm playing (Israeli) Noam Okun next. I'll got into that match very

seriously and with concentration."

Eighth-seeded Slovakian Dominik Hrbaty was untroubled by mismatched Chinese competitor Yu Wang, winning 6-2, 6-2, while Italian veteran Davide Sanguinetti needed three sets to beat Australian qualifier Nathan Healey 5-7, 7-5, 6-2.

The rain, which returned on Wednesday evening after a day of downpours on Tuesday, left five opening-round matches still unplayed including those involving Spanish top seed Carlos Moya and number five Marat Safin.



PHOTO: AFP

Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero hits a forehand against Kevin Kim of the USA during their second round match in the China Open in Beijing yesterday.

Paralympics begin today

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international, levels in able-bodied competition.

Shirley's 10.97 personal best, to cite one example, is just over one second beyond the current world record of 9.78 seconds in the 100 meter dash, set by US sprinter Tim Montgomery in 2002. Nigerian sprinter Qdekundo Adesoji, competing against other virtually blind sprinters like himself 30 years ago, clocked an extraordinary 10.76 in the same event.

Indeed, observers note, the Paralympics cleave to an exceptionally pure ideal of sports. While most top able-bodied athletes have turned professional, looking to sponsorships and advertising for revenue, Paralympic athletes remain closer to the amateur spirit that once animated the Olympic Games.

And even if the concept of a special Games for the disabled would have seemed strange in ancient Greece, the Paralympics more closely resemble its early precursor than the modern able-bodied Olympics in at least one respect: only events with objective measures of speed, strength and

distance are included. There are no sports requiring subjective judging such as gymnastics, diving or synchronized swimming.

Another less fortunate indicator of the seriousness of competition at the Paralympics, alas, is the presence of performance-enhancing drugs and cheating. Eleven athletes -- mostly weightlifters -- were disqualified from the Paralympics in 2000, more even than in the able-bodied Sydney Games that year.

And the Spanish basketball team competing in the category for the intellectually disabled in Sydney was stripped of its gold medal when it was revealed that most players had faked their disabilities.

One of the consequences of that scandal was the relegation of intellectual disability -- one of six broad categories -- to exhibition status at the Athens Games, and then only for two sports: table tennis and basketball.

The five disability groups in which medals are awarded, each of them with subdivisions based on severity, are amputees, athletes with cerebral palsy, the vision impaired, athletes with spinal inju-

ries, and "Les Autres," a French term meaning "the others" covering persons with a range of conditions that do not fit into any other category.

These fine distinctions in disability result in a plethora of medals, more than 3,000 all told. 1,097 gold medals alone will be awarded over the 12 days of competition.

The first Paralympics by that name took place in Rome in 1960, alongside the summer Games that year, bringing together less than 400 athletes from 23 countries. They were once again held in tandem with the summer Olympics in Tokyo in 1964, but then split off into an entirely separate event held in a different city than the summer Games until 1988. Since then, they have always followed the able-bodied Olympics.

Besides athletics and swimming, the other sports at the Paralympics are archery, wheelchair basketball, cycling, equestrian, wheelchair fencing, 5-a-side and 7-a-side football, goalball, judo, powerlifting, sailing, shooting, table tennis, wheelchair tennis, volleyball, wheelchair rugby and boccea.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

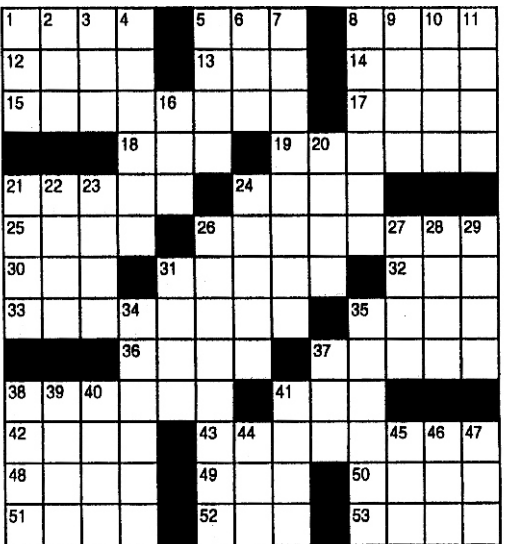
ACROSS
1 Hearty drink
5 Six-pack muscles
8 Hal-loween purchase
12 TV oldie, "— & Allie"
13 "Go, team!"
14 PC symbol
15 Burr role
17 Big rig
18 Historic period
19 Kind of apple or potato
21 Native New Zealander
24 Galileo's birthplace
25 — mater
26 Obliquely
30 All-purpose truck
31 Drag through the mud
32 Golf start
33 U. of Texas athlete
35 Cartoon skunk
LePew

DOWN
1 Go
2 Kids' card game
3 Jurist
4 Family subdivisions
5 Met
6 Disgraceful
7 General at
8 Church songbook
9 "Dead man's hand" pair
10 A handful
11 Make a sweater
16 — Lanka

Solution time: 21 mins.

ACROSS
1 HEARTY
5 SIXPACK
8 HALLOWEEN
12 TV
13 GO
14 PC
15 BURR
17 BIG
18 HISTORIC
19 KIND
21 NATIVE
24 GALILEO
25 MATER
26 OBLIQUELY
30 ALLE
31 DRAG
32 GOLF
33 UT
35 CARTOON
LEPEW

DOWN
1 GO
2 KIDS
3 JURIST
4 FAMILY
5 MET
6 DISGRACEFUL
7 GENERAL
8 CHURCH
9 DEAD
10 HANDFUL
11 MAKE
16 LANKA



CRYPTOQUIP

JDRW-JDGL GERBLZB GDRW

MDRMUZRRW LNU TBS

NU ABKU UBGLUZ UWWG:

"EKSUKELASTBS."

Yesterday's Cryptiquip: IF SMALL PURPLE FRUIT MAKES YOU BECOME ZANY, I RECKON YOU MUST BE PLUM CRAZY!

Today's Cryptiquip Clue: G equals S

The Cryptiquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

When asked about the inclusion of Khaled Mahmud against the West Indies after his surprise omission in the first match against South Africa, Athar made a contradictory statement to that of coach Dav Whatmore, who is also a selector.

"We felt the need for the presence of a senior player in the XI and that's why we picked Mahmud," informed Athar.

Whatmore had earlier explained that he wanted an extra paceman in the side and that's why Mahmud got the nod.

"I don't know what the coach had said," Athar said when his attention was drawn to the contradiction adding that he spoke from what he knew.

Court issues Dalmiya notice

CRICINFO, undated

A Bhopal court has ordered the registration of a contempt-of-court case against the Indian board for appointing Jagmohan Dalmiya as its patron-in-chief.

The Times of India reported that PK Nigam, the judge, had given an order asking the BCCI not to proceed with the proposed appointment, and the contempt application charges the board with breaching this injunction.

Yogesh Khattar, a former first-class cricketer, had approached the court in Bhopal to stop Dalmiya's appointment, feeling that it was an inappropriate step. The plea was that there was no provision for the appointment of a patron with powers superior to that of the president.

After hearing the case, the court had issued an order, saying that the defendants "will not act contrary to the rules and regulations framed by the BCCI in the Special General Meeting". However, the BCCI went ahead with their scheduled meeting last Sunday and Dalmiya was made patron-in-chief.

In the application, Khattar, has also asked that all properties of the BCCI be attached by the court and that all functionaries of the BCCI be "detained in civil prison for a term of three months".



PHOTO: REUTERS

LOVE BIRDS: Belgium's Kim Clijsters and Australian Lleyton Hewitt, the golden couple of tennis, have announced that they will marry next February in Australia.

Kim, Lleyton to finally wed



REUTERS/AFP, Brussels

Tennis love match Kim Clijsters of Belgium and Australian Lleyton Hewitt are to marry next February in Australia.

Clijsters, 21, said on her website that a party for their close friends would be held in Chateau Saint-Paul at Lummen in her native Belgium after the wedding in Australia.

"In December 2003 Kim and Lleyton Hewitt got engaged," a statement on the website said. "A year later the beautiful love story will have its logical extension with a

marriage in February in Australia."

Both players are former world number ones, but Clijsters, who has won 21 career titles, has not played since last May with a wrist injury.

Hewitt, 23, lost the US Open final to Roger Federer last weekend. He has won 23 titles in his career including the US Open in 2001 and Wimbledon in 2002.

Clijsters and Hewitt met at the Australian Open in 2000 when Kim's sister Elke asked her to get Hewitt's autograph and they got engaged after a romantic boat trip around Sydney Harbour last December.

"He invited me out for dinner on a boat and suddenly unveiled a ring and earrings," she said shortly before Christmas.

Hewitt, whose birthday is in February, first invited Clijsters out in late 2000 to a party for fellow Australian Pat Rafter.

Clijsters reached number one in August 2003 without winning a major title, having lost in the finals of four Grand Slams.

She admitted last year that she was considering a change in residency because of the amount of taxes she pays in Belgium, and did not rule out becoming an Australian citizen.

The pair follow in the footsteps of Steffi Graf, now retired, and Andre Agassi, also both former world number ones. They married in October 2001 and have a son and a daughter.