

AFRO-ASIAN CUP

Nimbus gets TV rights

CRICINFO, undated

The television rights for the 2005 Afro-Asia Cup have finally been confirmed Monday morning, with Nimbus Sports International of Singapore announced as the sole partner.

A lack of interest by the front-runners ESPN-STAR Sports and Ten Sports, both of whom are otherwise committed, had dampened the appeal of the event, as had the lack of availability of leading players.

In a statement released on Monday, the chief executive of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), Syed Ashraf Huq, said: "Nimbus made a terrific offer, well in excess of any prior media speculation, to acquire the worldwide rights to the next three Afro-Asia Cups. Not only will cricket fans the world over get the opportunity to watch some spectacular cricket between the best players from Africa and Asia, young cricketers across both continents will benefit because of the funds raised by these matches."

The 2005 Afro-Asia Cup, to be hosted by South Africa, starts later this month with three one-day internationals, the first being held at Centurion. Jagmohan Dalmiya, the ACC president and chairman of the Afro-Asian Cricket Co-operation, was delighted with the announcement: "The Afro-Asia Cup will do much to raise the funds necessary to boost activity and support for youth and junior cricket across Africa and Asia," he said. "Our working slogan is 'Cricket for Unity.' Singly we are strong, together we are even stronger."

The ICC match referee appointed for the Cup is Clive Lloyd, and the umpires Steve Davis (Australia) and Billy Dodrove (West Indies) will officiate in the three games.

'Lack of a fifth bowler still a worry'

PTI, Dambulla

India captain Rahul Dravid, in the moment of an emphatic win over the West Indies on Sunday, confessed the absence of a fifth regular bowler hurt his team as the opposition dug themselves out of a hole and posted a competitive total.

"It is a worry to us. Unfortunately we are not blessed with all-rounders. It is a tough decision to play with four bowlers," Dravid said after India won by six wickets in the Indian Oil Cup tri-series cricket one-day international here.

"Fortunately, our bowlers have done very well under the circumstances and bowled with discipline and control."

Dravid also said that India would continue to experiment with the batting order till they find an ideal combination in the shorter version of the game.

He said it was important to be a little flexible in the batting order though injury to some of the seniors had forced him to try out different batting combinations.

"We have already spoken about the need to be flexible. The injury to (VVS) Laxman forced us to try out a different batting order."

Batter's role

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10,000 runs in one-dayers. "It will be nice to complete 10,000 runs and win the trophy," said Ganguly, who has already scored 9,967 runs in 271 one-dayers with 22 hundreds and 59 half-centuries.

Sri Lankan opener Sanath Jayasuriya is also 33 runs away from the 10,000-mark.

India have won one of their two matches, losing to Sri Lanka on Saturday and beating the West Indies the following day.

Batsmen beware!

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against the West Indies at his home ground in Kandy last month.

"I was not aware of this record," said Muralitharan.

"It is nice to know I am the highest wicket-taker and I will try to achieve more."

The Sri Lankan said he had no plans to quit one-day cricket and concentrate only on Test matches.

"I want to play in both forms of the game as long as I can. I enjoy playing in one-dayers and Tests. I can reconsider my decision only if I am troubled with form or fitness problems."



Did U Know?

Table tennis is the world's most popular racket sport. It became an Olympic event in 1988.



PHOTO: AFP

WHO'S THAT BLONDE? Real Madrid's Brazilian superstar Ronaldo arrives with Danish friend Louise at a U2 concert, in Parken, Denmark on Sunday.

Jayasuriya and Vaas only for key games: Atapattu



AFP, Dambulla

Sri Lanka will avoid risking key injured batsman Sanath Jayasuriya and fast bowler Chaminda Vaas in unimportant matches of the ongoing triangular one-day cricket series, their captain said Monday.

Left-handed opener Jayasuriya dislocated his right shoulder while fielding during the Indian innings on Saturday, while left-arm seamer Vaas is recovering from a hamstring strain.

Jayasuriya batted in pain to score a vital 43 not out in his team's three-wicket victory over India in the opening match of the tournament, which also features the West Indies.

The hard-hitting opener is now just 33 short of becoming only the third batsman after India's Sachin Tendulkar and Pakistani Inzamam-ul-Haq to complete 10,000 runs in one-day cricket.

Vaas, who suffered his injury during the second and final Test against the West Indies in Kandy last month, did not play against India.

Sri Lanka are expected to win their second match here on Tuesday even without the duo as they clash with a depleted West Indies. They have already beaten the tourists in the two-Test series.

"We will assess Jayasuriya's condition on the afternoon of the match. He is progressing well and I hope he will be fit for more important games," Sri Lankan captain Marvan Atapattu said.

"Vaas' comeback will also be delayed as much as possible but he will be there for important matches," said Atapattu.

Both Jayasuriya and Vaas skipped their team's morning practice session on Monday.

Sri Lanka are likely to meet India in the final considering the current form of the West Indies, who came here without their stars following a contract dispute between the players and their cricket board.

Each team will play four matches in the tri-series before the day-night final in Colombo on August 9.

Also missing from Sri Lanka's team in the opening game against India was left-arm paceman Nuwan

Zoysa, suffering from a back injury.

"It was a big blow not to have Vaas and Zoysa in the first game. But our youngsters did well, especially Ferveez Maharoo and Dilhara Lokuhettige," said the Sri Lankan skipper.

Atapattu said his team would try to maintain their impressive home record despite the return of experienced Indian batsman Sourav Ganguly.

India have lost three of their last four one-dayers in Sri Lanka, including the Asia Cup final in Colombo last year.

"We know what he (Ganguly) is capable of. He is very talented. We are also aware that India can come back strongly. But we are not concerned about their team as we are concentrating on our cricket," he said.

Ganguly returned to the team after serving a four-match ban for India's slow over-rate against Pakistan in a home one-day series in April.

He has missed two games against Pakistan and as many in the ongoing tournament.

Ashraful makes Asian XI

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richer by US\$ 5,000 and the man of the tournament will earn US\$ 10,000.

Meanwhile, Reuters adds that the Africa XI will be captained in the first two matches by South African Shaun Pollock, with his compatriot Graeme Smith taking over in the final game, having completed a four-match ban for time-wasting in the West Indies earlier this year.

The Africa squad also includes Jacques Kallis, Mark Boucher and Heath Streak, one of three Zimbabweans in the squad. Batsman Steve Tikolo heads a delegation of three Kenyans in the squad. South Africans Makaya Ntini, Justin Kemp and Andre Nel are unavailable because of commitments in English county cricket.

Africa Cricket Association presi-

dent Peter Chingoka said the matches were a fund-raising initiative.

"The purpose of the series is to raise revenue to meet the mutual developmental goals in both continents and, as part of cricket's social responsibility, 10 percent of the net profits will go to a charitable cause to be announced by the end of this week," Chingoka told reporters.

"The Africa team is the best available. The timing is not perfect but we had to kickstart this venture now and sacrifice a bit, otherwise we would have had to wait over a year.

"It will be better in the additional series in Asia in 2006 and back in Africa in 2007."

SQUADS

AFRICA - Graeme Smith, Shaun Pollock, Boeta Dippenaar, AB de

Villiers, Jacques Kallis, Ashwell Prince, Albie Morkel, Mark Boucher, Monde Zondeki, Jacques Rudolph, Nicky Boje, Justin Ontong, Dale Steyn (all South Africa); Steve Tikolo, Collins Obuya, Thomas Odoyo (Kenya); Heath Streak, Tatenda Taibu, Andy Bignaut (Zimbabwe).

ASIA - Inzamam-ul-Haq, Yousuf Youhana, Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razzaq, Naveed ul-Hasan, Shoaib Akhtar (Pakistan); Rahul Dravid, Virender Sehwag, Irfan Pathan, Anil Kumble (India); Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Muttiah Muralitharan, Chaminda Vaas (Sri Lanka); Mohammad Ashraful (Bangladesh).

Stand by: Masrafe-bin-Mortuza, Khaled Mashud (Bangladesh), Marvan Atapattu (Sri Lanka).



PHOTO: AFP

BIG FOOT! German football legend Uwe Seeler poses next to a giant bronze sculpture of his right foot, at a sculptor's workshop in Suessen yesterday. The 3,9 tonne sculpture will be unveiled in Hamburg's AOL Arena for the opening of the 2005-2006 Bundesliga season.

United free to get Owen

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has been given the green light to bid for Real Madrid's Michael Owen and must now decide whether the England striker fits into his plans.

Ferguson already has four international strikers at his disposal in Wayne Rooney, Ruud van Nistelrooy, Louis Saha and Alan Smith.

However Owen's scoring record at the highest level is proven, and United have indicated they would back Ferguson should he want to bring Owen back to the Premiership from Madrid.

United chief executive David Gill said: "The money is there for Alex."

"If he identifies a talent that he thinks will improve the squad - and that is the crucial thing - the funds are available."

"The Glazers have said that if there is a big player out there who is available, then the money is there to go for him."

"We can still afford a lot of money for top players and at the same time we are also able to develop many of our own."

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said Owen was not a target.

"At the moment I'm not looking for a striker. I'm looking at some other areas," he said on Sky Sports. "I have not made any approach for Michael Owen."

Madrid have said they would listen to offers for Owen after signing strikers Julio Baptista and Robinho.

Owen has slipped to fifth in the pecking order behind the new arrivals plus Raul and Ronaldo.

The 25-year-old cost Madrid 8 million pounds last summer and they are expected to seek a profit, however United may be in a strong position if they are the only bidding club.

The 25-year-old knows he cannot afford to sit on the bench with the World Cup finals fast approaching but there has also been reported interest from Liverpool and Newcastle.

Figo tilting towards Inter

AFP, Rome

Real Madrid midfielder Luis Figo will turn down Liverpool's advances and sign for Inter Milan, it was reported here on Sunday.

The ANSA news agency claimed that negotiations are at an advanced stage and that the 32-year-old Portuguese international could finalise a deal with the Italians by August 4.

Meanwhile, Argentinian defender Walter Samuel will also leave Real Madrid and sign for Inter Milan on Monday, ANSA reported.

The 27-year-old will sign a four-year deal with the transfer believed to be worth 16 million euros.

Samuel first played in Italy in 2000 joining Roma after starting his career with Boca Juniors in Buenos Aires.

Robinho plays for Santos again

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian champions Santos beat arch-rivals Corinthians 4-2 on Sunday as striker Robinho returned to the side following completion of his \$30 million move to Real Madrid.

Robinho, who had refused to train or play for the club during the long-running transfer saga because he was not in the right frame of mind, was given a lukewarm reception by the crowd and missed an open goal during the second half.

"I'd give myself three out of ten," he told reporters, admitting he was out of shape. Robinho will stay at Santos until the end of next month before moving to Spain.

Robinho, who last played for Santos in the Libertadores Cup tie against Atletico Paranaense on June 1, was outshone by former Barcelona and Olympiakos midfielder Giovanni, who scored twice and set up a third goal.

Nehra cautioned for excessive appealing

REUTERS, Colombo

Indian left-arm seamer Ashish Nehra has been severely reprimanded by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for excessive appealing during a one-day international against Sri Lanka last week.

ICC match referee Mike Procter found Nehra guilty of breaching the council's code of conduct by preempting a decision by the umpire in Saturday's tense game in Dambulla, otherwise known as excessive appealing, the council said.

"Nehra pleaded guilty to the charge of celebrating the dismissal before the umpire had made his decision and of not turning around and appealing to the umpire," the ICC said in a statement forwarded by Sri Lanka Cricket on Monday.

Baptista officially Real's



REUTERS, Madrid

Brazilian forward Julio Baptista donned the all-white shirt of Real Madrid for the first time on Monday after signing a five-year deal with the club for an initial fee of 20 million euros (13.8 million pounds).

The 23-year-old international received an enthusiastic welcome from 500 fans at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium after he was presented with the number eight by honorary president Alfredo Di Stefano. "This is the happiest day of my life," said Baptista. "I hope that my time here will be a successful one and that I will help Real Madrid win many trophies."

Earlier Baptista told the club's website he was confident his move to the nine-time European champions would help him become a better player.

Real have also signed his international colleague Robinho but the 21-year-old striker will not join until August 25.

A convoluted transfer saga was finally brought to an end on Saturday when Robinho's club Santos accepted Real's \$30 million offer for their 60 percent share of the player's rights as long as he could make several more

appearances for them in the Brazilian championship.

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez said in signing the Brazilian duo, the club was aiming to honour its commitment to entertaining football.

"Baptista is a great player and a great person," he said. "He comes from Brazil, the cradle of the best football in the world."

"For everyone Brazil signifies magic and fantasy in football and that's why we've tried to bring players from there into our team."

In a radical overhaul of a squad that has struggled to live up to its billing over the past two seasons, Real have also signed Uruguayan duo Pablo Garcia and Carlos Diogo to add more depth and balance to midfield and defence.

The arrival of the new recruits is expected to accelerate the departure of several of Real's leading players.

Argentine defender Walter Samuel is poised to sign for Inter Milan for 16 million euros, nine million less than the fee for which he joined Real from AS Roma last season.

Former World and European Player of the Year Luis Figo is also expected to join Inter and England striker Michael Owen is reported to be mulling over a possible return to the Premier League in the light of the club's new signings up front.



PHOTO: AFP

THE 'BEAST' IS FOR REAL: Real Madrid's latest signing, Brazilian striker Julio Cesar Baptista (C) displays his shirt surrounded with the club's President Florentino Perez (L) and the legendary Alfredo Di Stefano (R) during his presentation at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid yesterday.

One and only

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Hackett, awarded the FINA Trophy for the best male swimmer of the championships, led all the way to win in a time of 14:42.58 and extend his unbeaten record in the event since 1996.

American Larsen Jensen finished second in 14:47.58, while David Davies of Britain was third in 14:48.11 in a repeat of the placings at last year's Athens Olympics.

"It is an awesome feeling to be able to achieve something like that and be the first person in history to do it," said Hackett.

"It is something that I have been focussing on and it's really satisfying to do it."

Edmestone won her first gold in a time of 30.45 to shave 0.12 seconds off the 30.57 set by Zoe Baker at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England.

American teenager Jessica Hardy, who set the 100m breast-stroke world record earlier this week, finished second in 30.85 while Brooke Hanson of Australia

was third in 30.89.

Lenton won the 50m freestyle after recovering from a slow start to touch in 24.59.

Marlene Veldhuis of the Netherlands finished second in 24.83 while Zhu Yingwen of China was third in 24.91 with less than a second separating the eight finalists.

Cseh took the lead after the first 75m of his race and pulled away to take the medley gold and add the world title to his European crown.

Hoff, 16, confirmed her status as the new big name of women's swimming with a runaway victory in the 400m medley in a time of 4:36.07 to add to the 200m medley and 4x200m relay golds.

Zimbabwe's Kirsty Coventry finished second to end with two golds and two silvers. She single-handedly helped her troubled African nation finish third on the medals table and earned herself the FINA Trophy for the best female swimmer.

Indian media

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"I am really not bothered about what people say or think about this marriage. As far as I am concerned, the happiness of my family and son is of top priority to me. As is the happiness of the couple. We are happy to have Mahrukh (the bride) as our daughter-in-law and she has already become part of our close-knit family," the former cricketer said.

A pointless BCB

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"We've had elections but whether the new system that replaced adhocism has improved conditions or not, only time will tell."

I believe any federation without genuine sports organisers will fail. Sports like badminton, table tennis once attracted fans till late night. Now, only a few games can do that."

He said that it would be hopeless if real organisers are ignored for political pressure.

"We have always been talking about keeping sports above politics. But have we really tried to follow the foreign model?"

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Carry on 5 Early hrs. 8 Curly hairdo 12 A Van Halen brother 13 Acknowledge 14 Cripple 15 Disney classic 17 "— partridge..." 18 Unable to escape 19 Time's up signal 21 Snack 24 Architect I.M. 25 Foolish 28 History 30 Kvetch 33 Mrs. McKinley 34 Decorative novelty 35 Mound stat 36 Zero-star review 37 German-Polish river 38 Some GIs' awards

39 Train component 41 Show-room sample 43 "My Friend —" 46 Standard 50 Choir's place 51 Guitar-and-castanets melody 54 Malaria symptom 55 Way back when 56 Beatles song 57 Brazen 58 Roulette bet 59 List-condensing abbr.

DOWNS 1 Float on the wind 2 Winglike 3 Hackman or Tunney 4 Range 5 Six-pack muscles 6 Miss Piggy's pronoun 7 Mop the decks 8 Stupely 9 Devotees' publications 10 Carnival attraction 11 The Tent-maker 16 Big bother

Solution time: 21 mins.

WASP HOP ELITE IGOR OUR ADEN DETONATE COLD BOX STILL S MOWED BERN LOG GRAVY FOR DESOLATE FALL SCHEME SILE IRON DECORATE DOPE IRA EXAM EWER NAM TENS

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12						13		14		
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50					51	52	53			
54					55			56		
57					58			59		

CRYPTOQUIP

WLYWB JOK KLQK AJEQM

NYCKVJIZMX LYV MYA

AQKWL NJ IJO COUJCY

CLY'C BZGGZMX KZEY?

Yesterday's Cryptquip: A NEW MOVIE ABOUT ARMORED WAR VEHICLES CAME OUT AROUND EIGHT WEEKS AGO, BUT IT TANKED.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: C equals S

The Cryptquip 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.