

## SUPER-SUBS MAY GO ICC thinking of Twenty20 event

REUTERS, Dubai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced plans on Wednesday to stage a Twenty20 world championship in September 2007.

World cricket's governing body also said it wanted to scrap the controversial super-sub rule in one-day internationals.

The two recommendations are subject to approval by the ICC executive board at a meeting in Dubai next month.

"We have already received bids from six to seven countries who are willing to play host to the (Twenty-20) event," ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed told reporters after a meeting of chief executives in Dubai.

There has been an explosion of interest in professional Twenty20 cricket since it was launched in England in 2003.

In its first season, the short-game format attracted an overall attendance of 250,000 to the evening games between county sides. It was also formally included in the Australian interstate competition this season.

Speed said the ICC planned to scrap the on-trial super-sub rule next month.

"We have recommended to the board that the on-trial super-sub rule may be discontinued from March 21, 2006, since it has proved to be unpopular with the teams and hasn't achieved the objective," he said.

"We introduced this rule on a 12-month trial basis last year to make one-day cricket more exciting. But from the feedback that we have received from captains and former players it was apparent that we should not continue with it."

The original intention of the super-sub rule was to encourage teams to make greater use of all-rounders.

In practice, the ICC said, teams have used specialists as substitutes and this has placed undue importance on winning the toss.

## Over appealing lands Asif fine

REUTERS, Multan

Pakistani pace bowler Mohammad Asif has been fined 10 per cent of his match fee for excessive appealing during Monday's third one-day international against India in Lahore.

Asif, who took two wickets in one over during the match, pleaded guilty at an International Cricket Council (ICC) hearing, the ICC said on Wednesday.

All Level 1 breaches of the ICC code of conduct carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand and a maximum of 50 per cent of a player's match fee. Asif cannot appeal the decision.

## U-19s win

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were reduced to 48-4, but a 77-run fifth wicket stand between Shamsur Rahman and Mehrab Hossain Jr steered them home, reaching 162 for 6 in 33.1 overs.

Man-of-the-match Shamsur Rahman hit a 50-ball 44 that featured nine boundaries while Mehrab contributed 35 off 71 balls with six hits to the fence. Skipper Mushfiqur was not out with a 25-ball 18.

Pascal was the most successful West Indies bowler claiming four wickets for 53 runs.

Meanwhile, India buried England, who shattered Bangladesh's semifinal hopes, under pile of runs to reach the final of the competition.

India rode on an unbeaten 129 by Cheteshwar Pujara to amass 292-4 in the first Super League semifinal and then shot England out for 58 to score a thumping 234-run victory.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**WEST INDIES:** 161 all out in 37.2 overs (Roach 29 not out, Pascal 29, Sing 24, Fletcher 18, Johnson 14; Nabil 3-24, Dolla 3-46, Sakib 2-32, Rezaul 1-0, Mehrab 1-8)  
**BANGLADESH:** 162 for 6 in 33.1 overs (Shamsur 44, Mehrab 35, Mushfiqur 18 not out, Sakib 15, Khadem 14, extras 23; Pascal 4-53, Brooks 1-27 and Roach 1-32)  
**Result:** Bangladesh Under-19 won by four wickets.

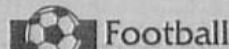


## Did U Know?

The very first Wimbledon Championship was held in 1877 and watched by some 200 spectators.

## PREMIERSHIP

# Garcia sinks Gunners



AFP, Liverpool

Luis Garcia scored an 87th-minute winner as Liverpool beat Arsenal 1-0 in the Premiership to close the gap on second-placed Manchester United to three points.

It was a win Liverpool fully deserved on the balance of play, but it would be a hard man who did not feel sympathy for Jens Lehmann, who saved a Steven Gerrard penalty and made a string of fine saves that seemed to have earned the Gunners an unlikely point.

The goal was the product of two substitutes. Dietmar Hamann's fierce drive was saved superbly by his fellow German, but this time, luck was against him, and Garcia reacted sharpest to force the rebound over the line, consigning Arsenal to their ninth defeat of the season.

Lehmann had insisted before the game that even in their weakened state they had the quality to beat the European champions, but that was never apparent, and for much of the game, the German keeper was all that stood between Liverpool and a comfortable victory.

His best save came after 21 minutes. A quickly taken freekick from Xabi Alonso had found Gerrard wide on the right and when he slung in a cross, Philippe Senderos, under minimal pressure from Robbie Fowler, misread the bounce, allowing the ball to loop backwards off his head.

Lehmann, diving backwards, somehow clawed it away for a corner.

Liverpool were utterly on top at that point, Gerrard and Alonso both caressing 50-yard balls to feet seemingly at will, and their only concern would have been how few clear chances their domination had created.

Their forwards are without a Premiership goal in 2006 and it is not hard to see why. John Arne Riise had sent a 25-yard drive scotching just wide, but their only other real chance of the first half was gifted to them by referee Graham Poll.

Harry Kewell seemed to have overhit his flick for Fernando Morientes after 31 minutes, but Poll saw illegality in the way Emmanuel Eboe shepherded the

Spaniard away from the ball and awarded a penalty.

Arsenal were furious, but Lehmann again came to their rescue, diving low to his right to parry Gerrard's kick.

Eboe and Kolo Toure were both given an instant recall to Arsenal's back four after their return from African Nations duty with Ivory Coast. Toure, in particular, had a fine tournament in Egypt, and he carried that form into Tuesday night.

He was within a couple of feet of giving Arsenal an 11th-minute lead as he met Cesc Fabregas's right-wing freekick with a firm downward header, and then made a critical impact at the other end of the pitch, nicking Kewell's cross away from Morientes as a goal seemed a formality.

Morientes's lack of goals remains a concern -- he has scored just three in the Premiership for

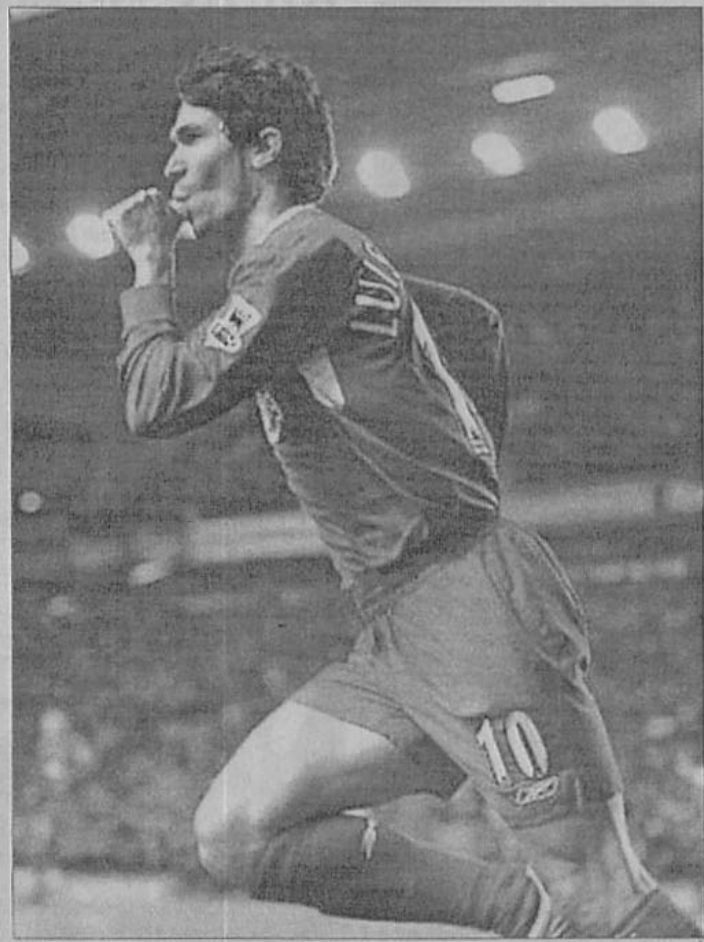
Liverpool this season -- and he spurned another good chance seven minutes before half-time, heading tamely at Lehmann after being picked out by Fowler.

Meeting a Gerrard cross after 62 minutes he made far better contact, only for his header to drift a fraction wide.

Fowler himself was tidy enough, and, five minutes after half-time, very nearly registered his first goal since his return to the club from Manchester City last month.

After cushioning Gerrard's cross and sweeping by Senderos, his low shot brilliantly saved by Lehmann sprawling to his right.

As the pressure continued, Fredrik Ljungberg cleared off the line from Hyypia and Lehmann pushed away a spectacular overhead from Kewell, but in the end logic could only be denied for so long.



Liverpool striker Luis Garcia celebrates his late winner against Arsenal in his trademark style during their Premiership clash at Anfield on Tuesday.

# Windies look back



AFP, Auckland

The West Indies launch their cricket tour of New Zealand here Thursday looking to regain some of the potency that once made them the most feared Test side in the world.

While they look to rediscover their strengths, the opening game of the tour, a Twenty20 hit out, will also serve as a farewell to one of the strongmen of New Zealand cricket, all-rounder Chris Cairns.

For the West Indies to arrive in New Zealand as underdogs was once unheard of, but they have been unable to climb out of the hole they dug for themselves on their last tour down under in 1999.

They started that tour with a 276-run partnership between Adrian Griffith and Sherwin Campbell for the first wicket of the first Test, and went on to be whitewashed 2-0 and 5-0 respectively in the Test and one-day series.

This time their batting line-up includes Test cricket's leading run-scorer Brian Lara, who is only available for the Test matches, as well as Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Ramnaresh Sarwan and Chris Gayle who all have the talent to score runs.

## Sania suffers shock defeat

AFP, Bangalore

Camilie Pin of France pulled off a major upset at the 175,000-dollar WTA Bangalore Open when she ousted top-seeded Indian Sania Mirza in the second round here on Wednesday.

Second-seeded Shahar Peer of Israel also crashed out of the tournament, losing 4-6, 2-6 to Italian Maria Camerin in the opening round.

Mirza comfortably won the opening set, but then failed to continue the momentum against a determined Pin, losing 6-1, 5-7, 2-6.

The 19-year-old Mirza was cheered by more than 1,000 fans as she broke her opponent's serve four times in the first set.

Pin recovered and fought back to take the second set before breaking the Indian twice in the third to wrap up the match.

Unseeded players Ukraine's Alona Bondarenko, Vania King of the United States and Hungarian Melinda Czink booked quarterfinal berths after winning in straight sets.

But their bowling attack -- one of the fastest in the game -- lacks potency and has been further weakened by the withdrawal of Corey Collymore.

After losing 15 of their past 17 one-day internationals, and 12 of the past 15 Tests, the West Indies languish in eighth place in the world Test and one-day rankings, ahead of only Zimbabwe and Bangladesh.

Yet, despite the lowly figures, coach Bennett King believes it would be unwise to write the Calypso kings off too early.

Two of the standout young players are wicketkeeper-batsman Denesh Ramdin and 22-year-old all-rounder Dwayne Bravo who averaged 53.5 with the bat and took eight wickets at 25 in two Tests against Australia last year.

"Bravo and Ramdin both played very well in the last two matches against Australia," skipper Chanderpaul said.

New Zealand will be without long-serving Chris Cairns when the series proper begins, and captain Stephen Fleming believes it could take three players to cover the roles performed by Cairns in New Zealand's one-day side.

"We've lost a player who could win matches and whenever we went on to the field with him, we knew we were in with a chance of

winning the game," Fleming said of the champion all-rounder who compiled the impressive statistics of 4,950 runs in one-day internationals at 29.46 and took 201 wickets at 32.80.

As a Test cricketer, he scored 3,320 runs at 33.53, took 218 wickets at 29.40 and smashed a world record 87 Test-match sixes.

"What we have to try to do is find a way to replicate that. Whether that's through one player, two players or even three players, we have to try to find a formula for making up for a loss of a player who is a once in a lifetime player," Fleming said.

Unfortunately the three players Fleming had in mind -- Jacob Oram, Kyle Mills and Andre Adams -- are all injured and won't be taking any part in the opening two matches.

But New Zealand have the satisfaction of knowing top fast bowler Shane Bond showed he had fully overcome his back problems in the recent 4-1 one-day series win over Sri Lanka and wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum is developing a growing reputation as an all-rounder.

The first of five one-day internationals between New Zealand and the West Indies begins in Wellington next Saturday, and the three-Test series starts in Auckland on March 9.

# Rajshahi take solo

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half-centuries by Sajjadul Hassan (55 off 82 balls) and Asadullah Khan Biplab (53 off 109 balls) made the difference for the hosts.

Chasing Sylhet's moderate 202, Khulna slumped to 57-4 before Sajjad and Biplab salvaged the side with a 107-run stand.

Visiting new ball operator Rezaul Haque (4-36) removed Biplab and rival captain Mohammad Salim in his second spell but the tail hanged on their task successfully.

Earlier, Sylhet were put into bat and raced to 63 without loss in 12 overs before first-change Ziaur -- adjudged man-of-the-match -- changed the scenario capturing 5-24 from 9.1 overs.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**DHAKA:** 188 all out in 47.1 overs (Uttam 57, Riyad 49, Sajjad 27, extras 22, Mushfiq 2-42, Shahjada 2-33, Farhad 4-22).

**RAJSHAH:** 189-5 in 42.5 overs (Jahurul 71, Junaid 24, Farhad 28, Naeem 29 n.o., extras 22, Ashraf 2-45).

**Result:** Rajshahi won by five wickets.

**CHITTAGONG:** 300-6 in 50 overs (Dhiman 32, Nazimuddin 93, Ehsanul 67, Faisal 66 n.o., Monir 3-47).

**BARISAL:** 234 all out in 48 overs (Nasiruddin 38, Towhid 61, Marshall 25, Monir 25, extras 20, Alamgir 2-39, Sajju 3-33).

**Result:** Chittagong won by 66 runs.

**SYLHET:** 202 all out in 46.4 overs (Rahman 40, Imtiaz 28, Mawla 24, Rana 42, Hasibul 20 n.o., Zia 5-24).

**KHULNA:** 203-7 in 49 overs (Aslam 32, Sajjad 55, Biplab 53, extras 36, Rezaul 4-36).

**Result:** Khulna won by three wickets.

## ONE-DAY POINTS TABLE

| Teams      | M | W | L | Pts |
|------------|---|---|---|-----|
| Rajshahi   | 5 | 5 | 0 | 10  |
| Dhaka      | 5 | 4 | 1 | 8   |
| Khulna     | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4   |
| Chittagong | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4   |
| Sylhet     | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2   |
| Barisal    | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2   |

## 'Three Ronaldos will shine at WC'

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal star Luis Figo predicts the three Ronaldos -- Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo, Real Madrid's Ronaldo and Barcelona's Ronaldinho -- will shine at the World Cup in Germany later this year.

"I believe Cristiano Ronaldo will shine because he is very good," Portuguese sports daily Record quoted the Inter Milan as saying on Wednesday.

"Ronaldo too because he always shines during big tournaments and Ronaldinho also because he is enjoying a very good phase of his career," he added.

Barcelona's 25-year-old Brazilian midfielder won his second straight FIFA World Player of the Year award in December.

Born Ronaldo de Assis Moreira, he was dubbed Ronaldinho -- which is Portuguese for "little Ronaldo" -- as a way to distinguish himself from fellow Brazilian footballer Ronaldo of Real Madrid.

Brazil lead FIFA's world rankings and is favoured to win its record sixth World Cup title.

## Eto'o rubbishes Chelsea rumours

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o says reports linking him with a move to Chelsea were intended to unsettle him ahead of the Champions League showdown between the two teams.

Eto'o was linked in the English newspapers on Tuesday with a 30-million pound summer switch to Stamford Bridge.

And those reports came just eight days before the first leg of the last-16 Champions League showdown in London.

Eto'o believes the reports, which suggested Thierry Henry would replace him at the Nou Camp, were specifically intended to unsettle him ahead of the big clash.

He told Spanish daily El Mundo Deportivo: "What happened? Have there been any offers to me, no? I think if we were playing Juventus they would say Fabio Capello wanted me."

## 'Not a good sign'

FROM PAGE 16  
knows that seamers will get some movement in Bogra, so I can't understand why our captain told this," said Rafiqul Islam Babu, chairman of the grounds committee.

## SL ODIs could

FROM PAGE 16  
"If finally we change the schedule it would be only the first two matches and the new dates are likely to be February 20 and 22," he added.

But another BCB joint-secretary, Rafiqul Islam Babu, who is also chairman of the grounds committee, said that it would not be easy for them to revise the schedule. "We have already finalised many things that's why it is not so easy to change the schedule," he said.

Meanwhile, Mamun informed that newly appointed chief executive officer of BCB Mahmudur Rahman will join his office today.

## AFC Challenge

FROM PAGE 16  
have already talked with the corporate houses. Their will be one main sponsor and five co-sponsors for the tournament," Helal said.

The BFF general secretary added that Bangladesh's Argentine coach Diego Cruciani's fate will be decided in the AFC disciplinary committee meeting on February 28.

The Argentine has been provisionally banned for two internationals for making an attempt to assault on Indian referee after the Bangladesh-Pakistan pre-qualifier of the Asian Cup in Dhaka last December.

"We will not appeal against the provisional ban because Bangladesh will already have played one match before the AFC disciplinary committee sits."

Sources said that video footage presented to the AFC did not support referee Reazul Haque's 'exaggerated' report on the incident.

## Pietersen won't

FROM PAGE 16  
on wickets that traditionally favour spin bowling.

Rahul Dravid's Indians are currently touring Pakistan, where they lost a three-Test series 1-0 and currently lead a five-match one-day series 2-1.

England will play two warm-up matches before the Test series commences in Nagpur on March 1 with Mohali and Mumbai as the other Test venues.

## Aussie eyes

FROM PAGE 16  
Spin legend Shane Warne has repeatedly said he has no intention of rejoining the one-day team.

Meanwhile, the top order bats have displayed patchy performances, too often leaving the middle order to save the day.

Chair of the national selection committee Trevor Hohns admitted to taking a gamble Wednesday when he recalled left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Johnson to the team to tour South Africa.



STILL NOT ENOUGH: Real Madrid star David Beckham and Cicinho look far from being happy even after they won 4-0 at Zaragoza in their Spanish Cup second leg semifinal at the Bernabeu on Tuesday.

## SPANISH KING'S CUP

# Real go down fighting



REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid were unable to complete an epic comeback victory over Real Zaragoza despite a storming 4-0 win at the Bernabeu in the return leg of their King's Cup semifinal on Tuesday.

Real, who were crushed 6-1 in last week's first leg, gave Zaragoza an almighty scare as they raced into a 3-0 lead inside the first 10 minutes courtesy of quickfire goals from Brazilian trio Cicinho, Robinho and Ronaldo.

Yet another Brazilian, Roberto Carlos, made it 4-0 just after the hour with a trademark rocket shot to set up a grandstand finish and Zaragoza looked as though they were about to fold as they struggled to stem the tide of Real attacks.

But despite a nerve-riddled performance in the final half hour the visitors managed to hang on to their narrow lead and claim a 6-5 aggregate victory that earned them a place in their third Cup final in six seasons.

Zaragoza will face either Espanyol or Deportivo Coruna in the final which is due to take place in April.

"We knew something like this might happen and conceding three

goals in 10 minutes made things hard, but we managed to hold out and achieve what we wanted," said Zaragoza coach Victor Munoz.

Real, who have not won a major trophy since June 2003, had made set their sights on winning the Cup this season, but in the end fell just short of achieving their objective.

Some 70,000 fans had been drawn to the Bernabeu by talk of a Real Madrid comeback and they were brought to their feet inside the first minute when Brazilian full-back Cicinho fired a thundering 25-metre drive into the back of the net to put them 1-0 up.

The fans were still celebrating when Real snatched a second, this time Robinho steered home at the far post after Ronaldo had clipped the ball across the area from the right.

And they were in a state of near delirium in the 10th minute when Ronaldo made it 3-0 as he stabbed the ball into the net from 10 metres out after David Beckham had swept in an inch-perfect cross from the right.

Zaragoza were stunned by Real's whirlwind start and nerves appeared to get the better of them as they made a series of errors in midfield and looked uncharacteristically shaky in defence.

They did manage one dangerous attack when Cani wafted a

cross into the area, but Real keeper Iker Casillas produced a brilliant reflex save to turn Ewerthon's pointblank header over the bar.

Opposite number Cesar, Casillas's former stand-in at Real, made an equalling good save to stop Real going 4-0 up when he blocked a close-range effort from Zinedine Zidane midway through the half.

Real kept up the breathless pace for the remainder of the half, but Zaragoza managed to keep them at bay until the break.

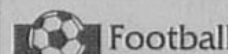
A nervous Zaragoza looked even more edgy when they stepped out for the second half and limited themselves to kicking the ball out of play as they were unable to stem the tide of Real Madrid attacks.

They conceded a fourth just after the hour courtesy of yet another of their Brazilian players, this time Roberto Carlos send a trademark rocket shot fizzing into the back of the net following a freekick routine.

Zaragoza looked as though they would cave in completely as they were pinned back in their area by wave after wave of Real attacks.

Zidane almost snatched the crucial fifth when he got his foot to a swirling Beckham cross, but his shot squirmed onto the bar and Zaragoza hung on to claim their place in the final.

# Figo-gate breaks out in Italy



AFP, Rome

Runaway Serie A leaders Juventus have lodged an official complaint with the Italian football federation following accusations made by Inter Milan's Luis Figo after their bad-tempered San Siro clash.

Portuguese international Figo claimed Juventus director Luciano Moggi was in referee Gianluca Paparesta's dressing room before Sunday's match, which Juve won 2-1.

"Figo's accusations are serious, absolutely unfounded and false," read a statement posted on Juventus' official website.

Inter responded with their own press release.

"Inter Milan considers the action of Juventus football club against Luis Figo as an inappropriate act of arrogance," it said.

"Inter will defend the reputation

of its player in all courts of law and will, if necessary, request punishment for whoever has called into question his honesty and rights to freedom of speech and expression."

Figo sparked the row by accusing



LUIS FIGO

Juventus' management of fraternising with Paparesta before the kick-off of the Scudetto showdown.

"What was Luciano Moggi doing in the referees' room?" Figo asked.

"I've been all over the world, but I've never known anyone quite like Moggi. He acts as if he is the grand-master of football."

"Can someone explain to me why he acts like he does. And furthermore, can someone tell me what he was doing in the referee's room before the game?"

Moggi refuted Figo's claim. "I certainly didn't go to see the referee before the game, only after it, as I always do out of courtesy," he said.