



A file photo shows Clijsters talking with her boyfriend, US basketball player Brian Lynch at the Roland-Garros in Paris in 2006.

Bowlers' day out

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a rare day of success for bowlers as all matches of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket competition featured at least one outstanding spell yesterday.

Rajat's 5-20 gave Sunnydale a 32-run win over University Laboratory School who were bowled out for 102 runs in 21.2 overs, as they were chasing Sunnydale's 134 all out in 34 overs at the East End Club ground. Pintu, from University Laboratory, took five for 32.

At the adjacent Dhupkhola Jagannath University ground, Ahamadabag Adarsha High School's Rubel took six wickets but his effort went in vain as his side lost by 63 runs against Government Laboratory School.

Maple Leaf withstood a seven-wicket haul from Abid of Siddeshwari Boys High School as they notched up 305 runs in 48 overs with Rafsan hitting 60. Later, Maple Leaf won by a massive margin of 260 runs, again due to a bowling effort. This one came from Zubair who took five for 25.

But at the Dhanmondi Club ground, it was an all-round show from Dilip Kumar which gave Badda High School a single wicket win over Alhaj Abbasuddin High School. Dilip took five wickets and later struck 77 runs.

Wimbledon

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The Australian and US Opens offer equal pay through all rounds, while the French Open pays its champions the same amount.

The decision is a complete volte-face for Wimbledon, which held out on unequal pay on a point of principle.

The All England Club consistently pointed out that men were required to play the best of five sets and women only the best of three.

Prize money for this year's event will be announced in April, though the new arrangements will cost the club around 600,000 pounds out of their surplus and the men's prize money will not be reduced.

The championships generate an annual profit of some 25 million pounds.

This year's Wimbledon runs from June 25 to July 8.

Pakistan up

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"I believe what happened in South Africa will not hurt us. We have to make sure we are confident and well prepared, and it is up to the players to show mental strength," said Woolmer, who took over as coach two years ago.

Woolmer, who coached South Africa in the 1996 and 1999 World Cups, managed to build the team yet the consistency factor is still missing. Despite luring former South African fielding maestro Jonty Rhodes for a two-week training stint last year, the Pakistanis still lack agility and accuracy in the field.

Wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal had a dismal period as he fumbled catches and erred in stumpings and needs confidence.

Dashing all-rounder Shahid Afridi and Razaq can destroy any attack – on their day.

However, Afridi will miss the first two matches in the Caribbean after being hit with a suspension following an altercation with a fan in South Africa.

Pakistan are in the same group as the West Indies, Zimbabwe and debutants Ireland in the first round.

Star Indian quartet's last shot at glory

REUTERS, New Delhi



to be their last World Cup.

The game's ultimate prize is still missing from the trophy cabinets of stalwarts Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and Anil Kumble.

Leg-spinner Kumble (36), India's most successful bowler, skipper Dravid and fellow batsmen Ganguly (both 34) and Tendulkar (33) have displayed their class for more than a decade and the next edition in 2011 could be a bridge too far.

Tendulkar, who will play in his fifth World Cup, holds the records for most one-day runs (14,783), hundreds (41) and caps (381). Ganguly and Dravid are also among only six players to aggregate more than 10,000 one-day runs.

On pitches expected to help batsmen, India can hope to make amends after champions Australia

thrashed the 1983 champions by 125 runs in the 2003 final in South Africa.

However, India face questions over their fielding, the poor form of explosive batsman Virender Sehwag and 22-year-old seamer Irfan Pathan and the team's slump before they won the recent home series against West Indies and Sri Lanka on batting tracks.

Sehwag has managed one fifty in 13 innings since May last year. Chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar has urged the instinctive player to show focus and preserve his wicket.

Pathan was emerging as coach Greg Chappell's trump card with batting heroics up the order to help India claim a record 17 successive wins chasing a target in 2006.

However, his bowling form has deserted him since the West Indies tour in May-July and the management, in an unprecedented move, sent him home from South Africa late last year asking him to regain his form in domestic tournaments.

However, he played just one game in the twin one-day series at home complaining of shoulder strain.

Key middle-order batsman

Yuvraj Singh has only just returned after he tore knee ligaments in October while Ajit Agarkar, the most capped seamer in the side, has a history of breaking down.

The team management could also face a dilemma over Kumble – who has rarely played one-dayers since 2003 – with off-spinner Harbhajan Singh holding the edge if only one specialist spinner is fielded for key games.

However, India can breathe easy over two comeback men.

Former skipper Ganguly and left-arm paceman Zaheer Khan have looked in fine touch since making strong comebacks late in 2006 after being sacked last February over form and fitness.

A window of opportunity has also opened following Australia's sudden form dip following defeats to England and New Zealand.

David has urged his players to show consistency and feels his team are capable repeating their 2003 run when they overcame a sluggish start to reach the final.

Millions of fickle Indian fans will hope their sporting idols would finally end their 24-year wait for success.

Aussies think of change

AFP, Sydney



scores at next month's World Cup to ease the pressure on their under-fire bowlers.

The defending world champions have for some time preferred to bat first and set the pace after winning the toss in one-day international cricket.

But after conceding the four greatest run-chases in limited-overs history during the past 14 months, Ponting admits it may be time for a change.

"We're going to come up against some small grounds in the World Cup (in the West Indies), so the consideration of batting second in one-day cricket is something there to think about," Ponting said Thursday.

"That straight away eases a bit of the pressure on the bowlers."

New Zealand successfully chased down 336 and 346 in the final two games of the Chappell-

Hadlee Trophy series to carry off a 3-0 sweep over Australia.

Only pace spearhead Brett Lee was missing from Australia's World Cup-strength bowling attack due to an injury to his ankle ligaments. He remains in serious doubt for the World Cup.

On grounds similar in size to those to be encountered in the West Indies, Australia's bowlers were toothless in stopping New Zealand claim the second and third-biggest run chases in one-day cricket history.

Australia have now lost their last five one-day internationals – their worst losing streak in a decade.

But while Ponting admits there are several areas of concern Australia must address before their tournament opener against Scotland on March 14, he denies the team is in crisis.

He does concede much of the aura surrounding Australian cricket has diminished ahead of the World Cup.

"I think it will have an affect on the other teams, they'll say, 'hang on England just beat Australia in (the tri-series) finals, New Zealand just beat Australia 3-0, why can't we beat them', " Ponting

Hasanuzzaman Bablu picked up the coupons to decide about the team's order.

"We are all set to make our dream come true with the launching of the Professional Football League," BFF president SA Sultan told the audience. "We have crossed hundreds of hurdles to start the league as per the guidelines of Asian Football Confederation (AFC)," he added.

The BFF already deferred the start of the league number of times but Sultan believes that the compe-

tition will inject new blood in the country's football once it rolls onto the pitch.

"I am hopeful about the success of the competition and I believe that the country's football will rise to new heights," he said.

He also informed that Sports adviser Tapan Chowdhury will open the B. League at the big bowl. According to fixture archivals Abahani and Mohammedan will kick horns in the competition on March 24.

Clijsters sets wedding date

AFP, Brussels

Belgian tennis star Kim Clijsters announced Wednesday that she will marry US basketball player Brian Lynch on July 14.

"We'll marry just after Wimbledon on July 14. I'll also be focusing my attention on this in the coming weeks," said the former world number one.

Lynch plays for Belgian club Bree, the town where Clijsters lives. The couple have been engaged since April last year.

Clijsters, who retires at the end of this year, will skip the French Open to concentrate her efforts on Wimbledon where she reached the semi-finals in 2003.

The 23-year-old has only won one Grand Slam, at the US Open in 2005, but lifted 34 singles titles in a career spanning 10 years that has earned her almost 15 million dollars. She is currently ranked number four in the world.

Sahagir salvages

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the only damage in the second session.

The dashing right-hander, ignored for the World Cup, initially survived twice to score his runs off 114 balls that featured five boundaries and a six over long-on against spinner Loudon.

But it was Sahagir who impressed everybody including the two national selectors despite throwing his wicket away after being caught at extra-cover by Loudon off Yardy. It was a treat to watch his cover drives during a 192-ball 86 run essay with the help of 14 well-struck boundaries.

The visitors faced only one over without any loss before the stumps were drawn for the day.

There was nothing wrong on the surface, rather wrong shot selections caused the early debacle for the locals which started with the departure of Jahurul Islam who chased a Stuart Broad delivery going out side the off-stump in the very first over only to be caught at point by Michael Carberry.

Then out-of-favour left-handed opener Mehrab Hossain (4), was snared at first slip, and Nasiruddin Faruque (12), caught and bowled, fell to another new ball bowler Graham Onions but the way Marshal Ayub and Nadif Chowdhury, considered future Bangladesh batsmen, got out left no explanation.

Marshall tried to hook a rising delivery of Tim Bresnan only to top edge a simple catch at short square-leg, taken by Nick Compton, while Nadif drove Tom Smith without any footwork to be grasped at first slip by Bresnan off Smith.

Mohammad Sharif (28 off 76 balls) shared a very good partnership with Sahagir but the 68-run seventh wicket partnership was broken following his stupid run out as he ran from the non-striking end after his partner pushed the ball to gully.

Broad was most successful England bowler with 3-35.

"We batted very badly early in the innings," Tushar expressed his disappointment adding that he was banking on his spinners to bounce back in the game.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH A: First innings 209 all out in 86.5 overs (Jahurul 0, Mehrab 4, Nasiruddin 12, Tushar 52, Marshal 5, Nadif 0, Sahagir 86, Sharif 28, Mosharraf 3, Dollar 9, Enamul 0 not out, extras 10; Broad 3-35, Onions 2-32, Bresnan 1-45, Smith 1-27, Yardy 1-6, Loudon 1-56)

ENGLAND A: First innings 0 for no loss in 1 over (Jefferson 0 not out, Compton 0 not out)

Bangladesh

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full ICC-member country.

"So to go abroad and win was not easy for us. We have done that so the spirit is very, very high."

Whatmore added that the matches against Bermuda on Sunday and Canada next Wednesday would be used to blood the younger members of the squad.

"We would like them to use these games to get settled in a little bit quicker than what maybe the case," Whatmore said.

"The stage next month is a big one. It is becoming more of a reality. The team is becoming more matured. They are improving and we have strung together some pretty good victories albeit against opposition we were supposed to win against anyway."

Lille hit out

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are calm about all this.

"Some English supporters came to express their anger over here which they can't do back home."

At least two supporters, one a schoolboy, were lifted over the barrier while security officials slammed shut a gate which had been pushed open by United supporters trying to relieve the pressure.

What could have been a chilling reminder of the Hillsborough tragedy in 1989 – in which 96 Liverpool fans were crushed to death in an FA Cup semifinal with Nottingham Forest – was not aided by the arrival of French riot police who fired tear gas into the stand.

The second so-called match

Zimbabwe: Trouble is the name of the game

AFP, Harare



In early February, Zimbabwe broke a 13-match losing sequence by beating Bangladesh, leaving their record going into the World Cup standing at 15 defeats in 16 matches.

All of those defeats were against Kenya, Bangladesh and South Africa's second string and included a 5-0 whitewash in Bangladesh at the end of 2006.

Gone are the days of former skipper Heath Streak, with his 237 wickets and almost 3,000 runs.

Gone also are Andy Flower and Henry Olonga who fled their country after the 2003 World Cup in fear of their lives after staging their high-profile "death of democracy" protest aimed at exposing the brutality of the Mugabe regime.

Zimbabwe has lost roughly the equivalent of an entire team in the years since the last World Cup. They have also lost their Test status after a series of disputes between Cricket Zimbabwe and senior players.

Key players have all been purged from the squad.

This impoverished country, with its 1,600 per cent inflation, has been left

with mostly raw youngsters to represent the team.

Very few of its 15-man squad have proper experience. Only captain Prosper Utseya and Gary Brent have played more than 50 ODIs.

Sometimes one has an outstanding performance, such as opening batsman Vusi Sibanda who averaged over 100 in the first three matches against Bangladesh, boosted by a 93 not out; Elton Chigumbura smashed them for seven sixes in one innings.

But they are rare bright spots. Despite the gloom, coach Kevin Curran has faith in his rookies.

"We have a lot of youngsters playing good cricket," said the former Test player.

"We have a pretty sharp front line attack in Anthony Ireland, Chris Mpofu and Edward Rainsford. And there has been some fine batting performances lately, notably by Sibanda, Chigumbura and Terrence Duffin. I believe we can be very competitive all round."

But lurking in the background are the memories of the embarrassing 35 and 38 run totals, both against Sri Lanka only a couple of years ago, and their 85 against West Indies and 94 against Pakistan.

Only three Zimbabwe batsmen have scored more than 1,000 runs;

the best average is a meagre 28 by Brendan Taylor. Only two bowlers have taken more than 30 wickets.

In an effort to keep the better Zimbabwe players in the country after the World Cup, Zimbabwe Cricket is believed to be offering attractive four-year contracts.

But the players will have to earn them with some tough assignments on the horizon.

"Our warm-up games against Bermuda and Australia are ideal for us because they are so different," added Curran.

"I expect our lads to beat Bermuda and to be competitive against Australia."

"I believe that if we had Andy Flower, Heath Streak and just a couple of others from those earlier days, we would be better overall today than the Zimbabwe team of that time."

"There's no reason at all why we shouldn't beat Ireland (in their first Group D match). They are on a level with Scotland and Canada. As for West Indies and Pakistan, these are great sides."

"But they can both be unpredictable and we might just catch one of them on a bad day."

"Whether we get through to the Super Eight has to be doubtful, but I think we will leave the World Cup with honour."

AFP, Dublin



World Cup debutants Ireland will rely on their big-hitting batsmen to steer them to respectability in the Caribbean

after their bowlers came under fire at the recent World Cricket League in Kenya.

At that tournament, they were on course for a famous victory over the experienced hosts when, after scoring 284-4, they had the Kenyans on the rack at 231-9 with six overs left. But the home side put on 55 for the final wicket to claim an unlikely win.

A tournament record in the WCL of just one win in five games was a mediocre return although the Irish recovered some pride by then heading to the Middle East where they crushed the UAE by an innings and 170 runs to reach the Intercontinental Cup final.

The stars of the match for Ireland were Eoin Morgan (209 not out, the highest score in Irish cricket history) and Andre Botha (157).

The two left-handers put on 360 for the third wicket as Ireland amassed a huge first-innings total of 531-5 declared. It is a joint record ICC Intercontinental Cup partnership for any wicket.

Ireland's Australian-born skip-

per Trent Johnston believes that kind of performance will stand the team in good stead in the World Cup where they have been grouped with the West Indies, Pakistan and Zimbabwe in the opening round.

"In Kenya, we weren't disciplined enough," he said. "But Eoin thoroughly deserves to be the record holder. The World Cup should be a great stage for him".

Morgan is one of three players who make their living in the English county championship. He's at Middlesex while fiery wicket-keeper Niall O'Brien is on Kent's books but is likely to feature for Northants next season alongside right-hand batsman Andrew White.

Ireland can also boast experience in its senior ranks.

As well as 33-year-old former New South Wales seamer Johnston, Ireland have two other Australians in left-hand batsman Jeremy Bray as well as fast bowler Dave Langford-Smith, both also from NSW.

For good measure, there is a South African in the shape of Botha.

Ireland also have a South African coach Adrian Birrell, formerly handler of Eastern Province.

Despite losing Ed Joyce, who was instrumental in them getting to the World Cup, to England, Ireland have great hope for another home-grown talent in the shape of

William Porterfield.

The 22-year-old found his feet in Kenya, making two hundreds and an eighty to finish with an average of 110.00

"I was delighted with how the players responded after Kenya," said Birrell, looking back on the win over the UAE.

"The tournament in Kenya wasn't all bad. We lost by the narrowest of margins and in cruel circumstances."

Ireland play two warm up games in Trinidad versus South Africa and Canada, before moving on to Jamaica, where they will play Zimbabwe on March 15, Pakistan on March 17, and the hosts West Indies on March 23.

Sheva gains

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emerged from their defensive shell to generate three clear chances to claim a winner in the final quarter of an hour.

Shevchenko, put into space by Didier Drogba's clever pass, fired the first over the bar from the 18-yard line.

Drogba himself struck the outside of the post from an acute angle before heading a Shevchenko cross tamely wide after the Ukrainian striker had skipped past two tackles to get clear on the right of the box.

1975: The Beginning

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on a disappointing exhibition. The culprit was one Sunil Gavaskar, who played out a mind boggling 174 balls for his 36 not out. India ended up playing out 60 overs for a score of 132 for 3. In his defence he claimed that the match could not be won, so he just gave himself a little batting practise. One doubts if Lord's had ever seen such a farce.

On the same day at Leeds, Australia beat Pakistan by 73 runs. For the first time since 1966 gates were closed and for the 22,000 crowd there was an excellent day of cricket. Allen Turner and Richard McCosker opened the innings with a partnership of 63 scored at four runs an over. Ross Edwards, came to the crease when the game required big hits and did so effortlessly. Australia's score of 278 seemed a winning one but it was soon obvious that the Pakistan batsmen intended to fight. At one point it seemed that Pakistan, chasing a score of 278 might win. At the end of their 40th over they had scored 172 for four wickets whereas Australia at the same stage had only scored 148 for four wickets. Majid Khan and Asif Iqbal both made half centuries. The fifth Pakistan wicket fell at 181, the tenth at 205. Lillee, showing all his speed took five for 34. Jeff Thomson, however, disappointed. He was in trouble with his run-up and delivery stride. His form was real worry to the team.

At Birmingham, the same day New Zealand trounced East Africa by 181 runs. Their Captain Glen Turner scored 171 not out as the game was a complete mismatch. At Manchester, a crowd of 5000 watched as the West Indies ambled past Sri Lanka by nine wickets. Put in on a pitch that did little to help the bowlers, Sri Lanka were utterly out of their depth and folded for 87. Fredericks and Murray treated the Sri Lanka bowlers with scant respect and put together a partnership of 52 before the persevering De Silva dismissed Fredericks.

The second so-called match

day was on the 11th of June and another four matches took place. At Nottingham, June 11 England took on New Zealand. New Zealand took a gamble and put England in to bat under heavy atmosphere. Collinge, bowled well and disposed of the openers, Amis and Jameson, by the time the total had reached 28. That was the end of New Zealand's early progress as the sun blazed down, for Fletcher and Hayes mastered the bowling with a stand of 83. The longer he batted the more audacious Fletcher became and his century came in the 55th over. After useful stands with Denness and Old, Fletcher was run out off the last ball of the innings for 131. New Zealand made England work hard for success without ever looking likely to create a surprise. They were jolted by the early departure of Turner and despite a brave 55 by Morrison the innings ended in the 60th over with England the complete masters. Greig, with his medium pacers, was the most successful bowler, with four for 45.

At Leeds, India won by ten wickets as they effortlessly overcame East Africa. Their batsmen were without the technique necessary to score runs off accurate Test class bowling and were bowled out for 120 in the 56th over. The India openers, Gavaskar and Engineer, had no difficulty in overhauling the East Africa score as they both notched up half centuries. At The Oval, Australia beat Sri Lanka by 52 runs. Facing a total of 328, the Sri Lanka batsmen, most of them short in stature, put up a brave show against the hostile Australian bowlers. They cut and hooked the short balls with marked skill and accuracy. Earlier Turner hit one gigantic 6 over long on and nine 4's in reaching 100 out of 178 off the penultimate ball before lunch.

The fourth and final game of the day was at Birmingham, where West Indies won thriller by one wicket, off the fourth ball of the last over. An outstanding match hung in the balance until the end and the

West Indies could not have been confident when their eighth wicket fell at 166 and their ninth at 203. The last pair, Murray and Roberts, who came together in the 46th over, scored the necessary 64 runs for victory. The Pakistan batsmen followed Majid's example, punishing anything not on a length and going audaciously for their strokes, but Mushtaq and Wasim Raja were unlucky to play on when both threatened to dominate the bowling. The West Indies batsmen showed almost indecent haste and, with the exception of Lloyd and Murray, lacked the patience to build a major innings. Murray's brand of restraint and the courage of Roberts eventually carried them to victory. The West Indies were showing the signs of world champions already.

The third and final match day was on the 14th of June and at Birmingham, England trounced East Africa by 196 runs. England racked up 290 and then Snow wrecked the East Africa innings with a spell of four wickets for five runs in six overs as the minnows were bowled out for a measly 94. At Nottingham, Pakistan crushed Sri Lanka by 192 runs. Batting first they piled on 330 as Zaheer Abbas made 97. In reply Sri Lanka were bundled out for a paltry 138.

At Manchester, New Zealand took on India and beat them by four wickets. It took a spirited 70 by Abid Ali batting at number seven to push the Indian total to respectable proportions after the top six failed them. Bedi was the last man out with India making 230. New Zealand owed their victory to a superb century by their captain, Turner who remained unbeaten for 114 as six other partners came and went for modest contributions. Turner's calmness when wickets were falling regularly at the other end proved too much for India and the New Zealand captain did everything but make the winning hit.

To be continued