

Born again Cummins

REUTERS, Gros Islet

Paceman Anderson Cummins will become only the second man to play for two teams in the World Cup if he turns out for Canada against Kenya on Wednesday.

The 40-year-old Barbadian-born fast bowler featured for the West Indies in the 1992 tournament and thought his chances of appearing in another World Cup had long gone.

But after moving to Canada in 1996, he became involved in local cricket there and worked his way on to the national team for this year's showpiece, allowing him to return to the Caribbean where he is hoping to spring some surprises.

"We recognise that playing to our potential can get us a place in the second round," he said last week.

Kepler Wessels played for Australia in the 1983 tournament before captaining his native South Africa in the 1992 event after they were readmitted to international sport following the end of apartheid.

Graeme Hick, who played for England in the 1992 edition, was in the Zimbabwe squad for the 1983 Cup but was not picked for any matches.

Cummins is also one of only five players to feature in a squad at the 1992 and 2007 World Cups. He joins illustrious company with Brian Lara, Sachin Tendulkar, Sanath Jayasuriya and Inzamamul Haq the other names.

Fast bowler Cummins played five tests for West Indies between 1993 and 1994 and amassed 63 one-day caps, the last of which came in a day/night match against Australia in Melbourne in 1995.

However, he is probably best remembered for a game he was not selected for.

In the Barbados test against South Africa in 1992, the Proteas' first back in the international arena, West Indies picked Kenny Benjamin ahead of him leading to uproar among his native Kensington Oval crowd.

Many boycotted the match and a sign reading "No Cummins, No Goings" has entered Caribbean cricket folklore.

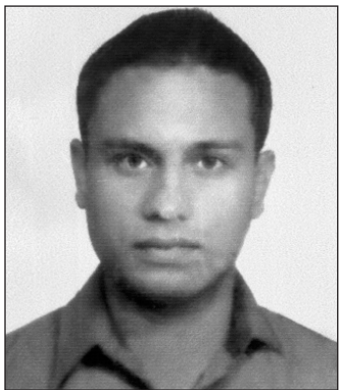
Cummins, two months from his 41st birthday, is a long way from the player he was in 1992 but he is eager to prove he deserves his place in history.

Cricketer's brother missing

SPORTS REPORTER

Hafizul Haq, who came to Dhaka for treatment on his mental illness, has been missing since March 5.

A general diary (GD no.579) was recorder under Mirpur Police



HAFIZUL HAQ

Station but police has so far had no trace of Hafiz, brother of professional cricketer Mofizul Haq.

An honours degree holder of Dhaka University, 29-year-old Hafiz has been suffering from depression for a few years in his Jessor's new Upashahar home, where his family now awaits for him.

Wenger blames

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so that he could have a breather afterwards.

"Maybe not sacrificing him for the Villa game was where I made a mistake. But you pay the players, and you sacrifice him in a Champions League game, so when he then goes and plays for France, it's hard to take."

Arsenal will travel to Aston Villa in the Premiership on Wednesday without Henry.

But Wenger is philosophical about the situation, and insists injuries to key players is one of the pitfalls of a post-World Cup season.

He added: "I think he's both relieved to be able to rest, but frustrated at the same time. There's nothing worse for a football player when you can't perform to the best of your abilities."

"It has not been his best season and the first to concede that would be Thierry. But he has had eight exceptional seasons for us."



PHOTO: STAR

Grameenphone chief marketing officer Stein Naevdal (C) speaks during a press conference at a local hotel yesterday.

D-day for St Kitts

AFP, Basseterre



ICC Cricket World Cup WEST INDIES 2007

St Kitts and Nevis are basking in the glory of hosting the World Cup even if it means finding themselves at the centre of a high-stakes, geo-political game.

The Warner Park Stadium here, which will stage matches involving world champions Australia as well as world number one South Africa, was built with a 12 million dollar donation from Taiwan who are battling to maintain their regional influence which is slowly being eaten away by the Chinese.

China has ploughed millions of dollars into the new stadia in Grenada and Antigua, which will stage second round matches, as well as Jamaica.

Taiwan, desperate to maintain its political alliances in the Caribbean, responded by financing the venue here as well as the warm-up facilities on St Vincent.

"On behalf of the government I thank Taiwan for their support in making this venue ready," Denzil Douglas, the prime minister of St Kitts and Nevis, told AFP.

"We look forward to hosting the top teams and I have no doubt in my mind that with a lot of hard work we have made ourselves ready for the World Cup."

Australia open their title defence against the minnows of Scotland here on Wednesday.

The islands, which won their independence from the British in 1983, produced former West Indies international Keith Arthurton and current star Runako Morton.

It hosted its first one-day international against India in May last year when a public holiday was declared.

The minister for sports and tourism Ricky Skerritt believes his country's elevation to hosting World Cup games represents a major achievement.

"The World Cup means everything to St. Kitts does not have a history of cricket. To elevate us from hosting India last year to having Australia and South Africa is great," said Skerritt, a former West Indian team manager.

"Even though the West Indies is not playing here, the ticket sales has been fairly good, some 50-percent for smaller matches (Netherlands makes up Group A) and a virtual sell-out for Australia-South Africa match on March 24."

Some 3000-4000 Australians and South Africans are expected to descend on the ground for that crucial game.

Among the already arrived is Michael Brown, general manager of operations at Cricket Australia.

"It's exciting to be here. A lot of tours have been taking Australians to St Kitts and we hope it provides them great moments," said Brown.

Scots and Dutch are here in numbers.

"Around 100 Scots have arrived and with the Dutch island, St Martin so close, we also expect the Dutch to come and watch cricket," said Charles Wilkin, the chairman of the local organising committee.

English involvement here is also significant.

The ground is named after Sir Thomas Warner, founder of the first English settlement here in the 1600s.

However, not everyone is happy. "We wanted the West Indies to play here. St. Kitts should have hosted the West Indies or India, but still it's something to cheer about," said taxi driver Alex Isaac.

Sevilla face

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Sunday's 0-0 draw with Hamburg. Benfica, who also failed to advance in the Champions League, lost 2-1 in the first leg against Paris St Germain who are facing relegation from the top flight in France after just six league wins all season.

Benfica will be without Brazilian defender Luisao after he failed to recover from a knee injury.

While Benfica look to have a good chance of surviving the tie, the same looks unlikely for Braga who travel to Tottenham Hotspur after losing the first leg 3-2 at home.

Tottenham, in a rich vein of scoring form with 20 goals in their last six matches, will be without Bulgarian striker Dimitar Berbatov who has a groin injury, but looked too strong for the Portuguese side last week and could well win their eighth successive UEFA Cup match of the season.

If they do go through to the last eight, they should be joined by English rivals Newcastle United, who beat AZ Alkmaar 4-2 at home last week.

However, after racing into a 3-0 lead inside 23 minutes, Newcastle allowed the Dutch team back into the tie by conceding two goals.

The Dutch club have never lost at home in 28 years of European competition and Newcastle look set for a nervy night before probably sealing a place in Friday's quarterfinal draw.

Tale of a cricket tragic

AFP, Basseterre

Growing up in Australia, Paul Hoffmann could only dream of playing in the World Cup.

On Wednesday, that dream will come true but not in the way he imagined.

The 37-year-old seamer will be playing for his adopted Scotland against the country of his birth.

"I'd been playing cricket in Australia up to the age of 26 but it wasn't so much a career as a pastime," said Hoffmann who left Queenstand behind when he was 26 to go travelling.

"My only ambition was to find a job, buy a house, settle down and get married. But something drew me to Scotland, and I've been here ever since."

He arrived in Scotland with cricket in his blood having played state cricket in Sydney.

"In the summer of 1995 I played some league cricket in Wales," Hoffmann told The Scotsman newspaper.

"I was fascinated by Edinburgh, the Highlands and Loch Ness. That was somewhere I desperately wanted to see."

Briefly back in Australia, Hoffmann contacted a league club in Scotland, Uddingston. To his surprise he got an offer back in the post.

"It was 100 pounds a week. Now I've pretty much turned full circle, from being a true-blue, born-and-bred Aussie to being ten years in Scotland with plenty to look forward to in cricket, work and in marriage."

Hoffmann came across the likes of current Australian skipper Ricky Ponting, Adam Gilchrist and Glenn McGrath in grade cricket in Sydney. He cherishes the memories.

"At schoolboy level, Adam Gilchrist was the first ever batsman to hit me for a six," said Hoffmann who has 15 ODI wickets since his 3-22 debut against Pakistan last June.

"In '94, I was playing for the New South Wales 2nd XI and Ricky Ponting was on the other side, with the Australian Cricket Academy. I had him dropped at second slip."

"Glenn McGrath and I had opened the bowling together in a pre-season game at Sydney University. He was a real gentleman and I remember him giving me some insoles when I struggled with shin splints."

He also played against Australian World Cup batsman Mike Hussey in a Scottish League match.

"Hussey was struggling to adjust to the slow wickets and only made 19, getting out to our 52-year-old, left-arm spinner."

India not crazy

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"If you still see Indians at the World Cup, they will probably have come from the United States or Canada."

Hoon explained that an eight-night tour to the Caribbean, which a month back was offered for 350,000 rupees (7,800 dollars), is now available for 250,000 rupees.

"The travel industry has been forced to drop rates because there were few people interested," said Hoon.

"There were at least 50,000 Indians who travelled to South Africa for the 2003 World Cup. We will be happy if 5,000 make it this time."

Hoon, however, conceded all that could change if India made it to the semifinals.

"I am not a cricket fanatic to pray for our team, but this time I will be saying a few prayers."

Jayawardene praises coach

BBC ONLINE, undated

Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene has paid tribute to coach Tom Moody ahead of his side's opening World Cup match against Bermuda on Thursday.

Moody, a World Cup winner as a player with Australia in 1999, is among those linked to the England coach's job should Duncan Fletcher leave the post.

Jayawardene said: "He has brought something different to the way we play."

"He's taught us we need to improve every day, that there are no comfort zones. We're a better working unit."

Four of Sri Lanka's current squad -- Muttiah Muralidaran, Sanath Jayasuriya, Chaminda Vaas and Marvan Atapattu -- were part of the side that won the World Cup in 1996.

And Jayawardene is optimistic that the old hands can inspire his side to a repeat performance in the Caribbean.

"When we had our team meetings they were explaining to us what the feeling is like and why they want to win another World Cup," he said.

"It is amazing the way they talk about it and the pride in it. For every cricketer the World Cup is the ultimate goal."

Sri Lanka, who also face India and Bangladesh in the group stages, are also drawing inspiration from their 5-0 thrashing of England in last summer's NatWest Series.

"It was a tour that our younger guys got a lot from," said Jayawardene.

"We went there as underdogs, it was a learning experience and we came up trumps in the end."

"The players knew they could handle pressure and had the ability to perform at that level."

Smith scoffs at chokers tag

CRICINFO, undated

South Africa's tag as World Cup "chokers" continues to follow the team but Graeme Smith said they had moved on from past disappointments. Smith said there was no hangover from the 1999 dramas that resulted in Australia eliminating South Africa in a tied semifinal.

Herschelle Gibbs' famous dropped catch that allowed Steve Waugh to go on and make a match-winning century in a Super Sixes game was followed four days later by the tie. The dramatic last-over run-out of Allan Donald, when South Africa needed only one run from three balls, knocked the team out of the World Cup.

Smith said the "choker" label given to South Africa by Waugh had become irrelevant. "The chokers tag is something we have always struggled to get rid of, which was given to us by an individual," Smith told Reuters.

"It is something this team has found quite amusing at times. A lot of those things are speculation and it (winning) comes down to the day."

"The team has performed well under pressure, won from tight situations from where no one gave us any hope. I'd say in our environment that word is quite a laughable word, except when you are eating spare ribs or something like that."

NZ win boosts

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Bashar said his team had been looking forward to playing competitive cricket against India and Sri Lanka and hoping to beat one of them to boost chances of qualifying for the next round.

"We have two tough sides in India and Sri Lanka in our group, but we are confident. We are looking to get a win against at least one of them," said the Bangladeshi skipper.

"We have been preparing for this tournament for quite a while and we are here to play good cricket."

Totti ends

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finals beginning on June 7 and which is being co-hosted by Switzerland and Austria.

Totti has been on target for his club this season and is the league's leading scorer firing 18 goals in 27 matches.

AS Roma presently occupy second place in the Serie A behind leaders Inter and recently qualified for the Champions League quarterfinal after dismissing French side Lyon last week.

Kenya eye

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Odhiambo, Thomas Odoyo, Peter Ongondo, Lameck Onyango, Maurice Ouma (wkt), Malhar Patel, Ravi Shah, Tony Sully, John Varaiya.

CANADA (From): Hiren Davison (capt), Ashish Bagai (wkt), Geoffrey Barnett, Umar Bhatti, Ian Billcliff, Desmond Chumney, Austin Codrington, George Codrington, Dhaniraman, Ashif Mulla (wkt), Henry Osinde, Abdoool Samad, Kevin Sander.

A blow for Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER



Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League

Dramatic batting collapses saw eighteen wickets tumble on the second day of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League match between Dhaka and Khulna at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Khulna left-arm spinner Manzarul Islam, also a national discard, ran havoc in the Dhaka first innings with a five-wicket haul to shatter the title hopes of the home side who skittled out for 87.

Despite having a massive 201-run lead, Khulna preferred not to force a follow-on but their decision to bat again proved fatal as they lost the advantage by crashing to 88-7 at stumps in their second innings, still with a handy lead of 289.

On the other hand, another title contenders Rajshahi took an edge against Chittagong after the second day's play at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

DHAKA-KHULNA

Young pacer Mohammad Azim captured the last wicket in the fourth over of the morning to return with figures of 5-54 as Khulna ended on 288, having added just two runs to

their overnight score. But it only paved the way for Khulna new ball bowler Ziaur Rahman and Manzarul to rip through the Dhaka first innings.

Ziaur started the carnage with three wickets for 29 runs in 13 overs while Manzarul was the wrecker in chief by claiming five wickets for 25 runs from very tidy 22 overs.

Azim, however, did not lose heart by his team's disappointing batting performance as he grabbed three wickets to see Khulna tottering in their second innings. Sharifullah took two wickets.

Dhaka needed something special to turn the table and regain the title but the fact is that inform Manzarul was still at the crease on one.

CHITTAGONG-RAJSHAHI

Chittagong rode on a 141-run opening partnership between Gazi Salahuddin and Nafees Iqbal to score 239-6 before stumps were drawn with the hosts still 108 runs behind Rajshahi's first innings total.

Salahuddin scored 79 off 114 balls with the help of a dozen fours while Nafees chipped in with 77 off 171 deliveries that saw nine fours and a six. Despite the bold start, the home team lost their way as Sohrawardi Shuvo picked up three wickets for 57 runs. Elias Sunny was batting on 31.

Earlier Arif Hossain remained not out on 42 as Rajshahi were all out for 347 after resuming on 325-9.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI: First innings 347 all out in 93.3 overs (Rabiul 18, Junaid 9, Farhad Hossain 11, Naeem 68, Anisur 36, Mushfiq 31, Hasanuzzaman 28, Farhad Reza 55, Shuvo 26, Arif 42 not out, Sumon 9, extras 14, Waskuruni 2-14, Saju 4-124, Sunny 2-43, Sabbir 1-95, Dhiman 1-29).

CHITTAGONG: First innings 239-6 in 83.4 overs (Salahuddin 79, Nafis 77, Mithu 19, Sunny 31 not out, Ehsanul 16, Faisal 6, Dhiman 0, extras 11; Naeem 1-14, Shuvo 3-57, Arif 1-50).

KHULNA: First innings 288 all out and second innings 88-7 in 38.1 overs (Sadat 9, Sajjadul 3, Monirul 18, Asadullah 28, Jamal 0, Salim 14, Manzarul 1 not out, Imrul 4, extras 11; Azim 3-28, Nazmul 1-17, Sharifullah 2-23).

DHAKA: First innings 87 all out in 45 overs (Uttam 10, Anwar 8, Al-Shahriar 7, Shamsur 4, Marshal 27, Sharifullah 1, Sajjad 0, Rashedul 16 not out, Nazmul 1, Mahbubul 8, Azim 1, extras 4; Ziaur 3-29, Manzarul 5-25, Fahim 2-24).

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

European Standard School (ESS) earned a massive 151-run victory over Kamapara High School in the Standard Chartered Schools Cricket competition at the Uttara Friends Club ground yesterday.

Zabir struck 74 to power the Dhanmondi-based school as they posted 296-9 in 50 overs. In reply, Kamapara were bowled out for 145 runs in 34.1 overs with Ziaul picking up four wickets.

Raihan took five wickets for just four runs to give Matuail Multilateral School to a six-wicket win over Willes Little Flower School at the Kalindi Cricket Ground.

In other matches, Lalmatia Housing Society School (178-3) beat Gulshan Model High School (176-10) while National Bangla High School (215-10) crushed Islami Adarsha High School (115-10) by 100 runs.

Our correspondent from Gaibandha adds: In one of the shortest finals, Kanchipara Academy crushed Mohimaganj High School by nine wickets in the school cricket competition at the local stadium yesterday. Mohimaganj were bowled out for 53 runs in 18 overs. Kanchipara clinched the local school title as they romped home in 10 overs with nine wickets in hand.

APARTMENTS AWAIT TIGERS!

Property developers Neer have given the Tigers incentives to look forward to if they can beat India, make it to Super Eight or even become champions in the World Cup in West Indies.

According to managing director Architect Mobassher Hossain, members of Bangladesh cricket team will be awarded one apartment for beating India and one apartment if they reach the second round.

If the Tigers become world champions on April 28, each player will receive one apartment from the

developers.

FIRST DIV CRICKET

Prantik Krira Chakra beat CCS by one wicket in a crucial bottom-of-table clash in the Kai-Altech First Division League at the Dhaka University ground.

In an exciting finish, Prantik won off the last ball of the match as they chased down 237 for victory on the dustiest cricket ground in Dhaka.

Batting first, CCS rode on Mona (75) and Armit (46) as they shared a 133-run opening stand. But their innings fell apart once the openers fell as they lost their last six wickets in the span of seven overs.

Mona and Bijoy took three wickets each but could not stave off their sixth consecutive loss.

At BKSP, Uttara Sporting Club won a low-scoring affair against Rupali Bank by 10 runs. Ashraf took three wickets while Emon, Nazrul and Momin took two wickets each as Rupali bowled out Uttara for 114 in 41.4 overs. But they were bowled out for 104 in 30.5 overs, as Iftekhar and Ishtiaq shared five wickets.

Zahid (86*) and Shamsul (65*) batted beautifully to give Kathalbagan a 5-wicket win over Lalmatia Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium while at the City Club ground, Jatrabari beat title-contenders Orient Sporting Club by 29 runs.

NATIONAL YOUTH FOOTBALL

Sixty teams will take part in the Western Union National Youth Football Championship which begins on March 28.

Nine venues -- Jhenidah, Narail, Patuakhali, Shariatpur, Sherpur, Lalmonirhat, Joypurhat, Habiganj and Feni -- will host the first round matches. Nine zonal champions will join hosts Satkhira to play the final round matches there.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CHESS

Defending champion Rani Hamid kept her lead in the Aromatic Gold 28th National Women's Chess competition

at the federation hall room.

The international woman master beat Kishwara Shajin in her eighth round tie as she maintained her place with eight points. Sharmin Sultana is in second place with seven points with her win against Nazrana Khan in the same round.

GPPACER HUNT

Five Dhaka boys will battle it out with 19 others in the final round of the GrameenPhone Pacer Hunt at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on March 20.

Shajahan Tipu (82mph), Abdullah Al Mamun (81mph) and Shamim Ahmed, Khairul Anam and Rejaul Hossain (76mph each) are up against nineteen pace bowlers from across the country in the second battle for the fastest bowler in Bangladesh.

Mohammad Salahuddin of Satkhira leads the pack with 83mph being his top speed.

The selected are requested to report to head coach of National Pace Academy Sarwar Imran at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on March 20.

The fast bowlers are: Salahuddin (Satkhira), Rubel Hossain (Bagerhat), Shajahan Tipu (Dhaka), Masum Billah (Bagerhat), Sirajur Rahman (Khulna), Mushfiqul Alam (Panchagarh), Abdullah Al Mamun (Dhaka), Sohel Ahmed (Mymensingh), Iqbal Hossain (Noakhali), Mohammad Shathil (Narayanganj), Forhad Hossain (Jessore), Kamrul Islam Rabbi (Barisal), Manish Hawlader (Khulna), Moniruzzaman (Magura), Sohel Parvez (Khulna), Yousuf Ali (Bogra), Ariful Islam (Dinajpur), Barkatullah Al Amin (Pabna), Shamim Ahmed (Dhaka), Khairul Anam (Dhaka), Rejaul Hossain (Dhaka), Jubair Hossain (Madaripur), Mobassir Khan (Rajshahi) and Abdul Aziz (Gazipur).

India return 'home'

AFP, Port of Spain



ICC Cricket World Cup WEST INDIES 2007

Bangladesh at the Queen's Park Oval here on Saturday.

Three of India's four wins in 42 Tests in the Caribbean have come at the Oval, including the famous one in 1976 when they chased a then record 403 to romp home by seven wickets.

India also clinched their only one-day series in the West Indies at this venue in 2002 under Sourav Ganguly's captaincy when they triumphed 2-1 against Carl Hooper's team.

They have also never been short of crowd support at this venue because of a large number of people of Indian origin.

Rahul Dravid's Indians looked impressive in winning both of their World Cup warm-up matches against the Netherlands and the hosts, but have yet to solve their batting problems ahead of the main competition.

Virender Sehwag's form is a major cause of concern as the hard-hitting opener has scored just one half-century in his last 13 one-dayers.

He also failed to regain form in practice games, scoring 28 against the Netherlands and a duck against the West Indies.