

## Irish heroes return home

BBC ONLINE, undated

Ireland's cricket squad have arrived home to an enthusiastic welcome in Dublin after their exploits in the World Cup in the Caribbean.

Irish sports minister John O'Donoghue was among hundreds of supporters who turned up at Dublin Airport to greet the returning heroes on Tuesday.

The Irish team created a sensation at the competition by defeating Pakistan to qualify for the Super 8s stage.

Ireland then went on beat another Test-playing nation Bangladesh.

"It has been a fairytale for all of the guys," said vice-captain Kyle McCallan.

"We have been all over the Caribbean and have played against the best teams in the world.

"Now we are coming home to a Friends Provident match against Kent on Sunday and hopefully we will see a big crowd at that."

Bowler Boyd Rankin has been ruled out of Sunday's match at Stormont because he is required by his county Derbyshire this weekend.

There are also doubts about the availability of Niall O'Brien and Eoin Morgan who are on the books of Northants and Middlesex.

An Irish cricket spokesman said on Tuesday that they were hopeful that the duo would be available for this week-end's match.

Ireland are also making strenuous efforts to sign two overseas professionals for the Friends Provident Trophy.

At least one deal is expected to be announced later this week.

## Crowe not

FROM PAGE 17

to be very lucky," Crowe said he was disappointed that the New Zealand players didn't seem to be hard-hit by the nature of that defeat, as they all spoke of how it hadn't knocked their confidence.

"They fall into doing the same PR speak and putting a positive spin on things," he said.

"But the Australian game was diabolical and that was such a crucial match."

He believed the build-up to the Australia clash was where New Zealand's campaign began to unravel, with bowling spearhead Shane Bond missing the game because he fell sick the night before.

"What are you doing eating a dodgy fish curry that's going to take you out of the game the next day?" he said.

"They needed Bond there, they needed Jacob Oram there. I don't care about (Oram's) bruised heel -- when you've got seven or eight days to play, you get out there and play what are going to be the three most important games of your career.

"They didn't front up, they backed out and they just said 'we had our eye on the Sri Lankan game'.

"Well they didn't have their eye on that because as we've seen today (Tuesday), they just didn't perform as well as this well-groomed Sri Lankan side."

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17

Akota SKS (139-7 in 41.4 overs) beat Gopibagh Friends (137-10 in 44.3 overs) by three wickets while Kalabagan Cricket Academy (270-10 in 49.2 overs) outclassed Chandpur Cricket Academy (199-10 in 49.3 overs) by 71 runs.

### MA JABBAR TENNIS

Amol Roy and Prithul Mondal advanced to the men's singles final of the MA Jabbar Memorial Tennis competition, winning their respective semifinals at the National Tennis Complex.

Amol Roy beat Ranjan Ram 6-2, 6-2 while Prithul Mondal defeated Dipu Lal 3-6, 7-5, 6-3.

In the boys' under-16 singles, Mofazzal Hossain and Omar Sunny moved to the final. Mofazzal beat Sabbir Redwan 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 while Sunny crushed Hanif Munna 6-0, 6-0 in the semi-finals.

In the girls' under-13 singles, Sadi secured the final berth with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Khushbu.

## Fleemo tired

FROM PAGE 20

As good as he was, we were equally as poor."

Reflecting on his team's approach, Fleming said: "We were very nervous. We were desperate to get through this and get to the final."

He said mediocre top-order batting -- he himself made just one following four successive noughts against Sri Lanka -- had also cost New Zealand dear.

"At some point it was probably going to expose us during a World Cup and it did today (Tuesday)."

## A vital push

FROM PAGE 20

And Jayawardene also said he hoped his side could emulate the long-term impact of the 1996 team.

"The '96 group changed the course of Sri Lankan cricket completely and those guys cleared the way for us to achieve higher goals."

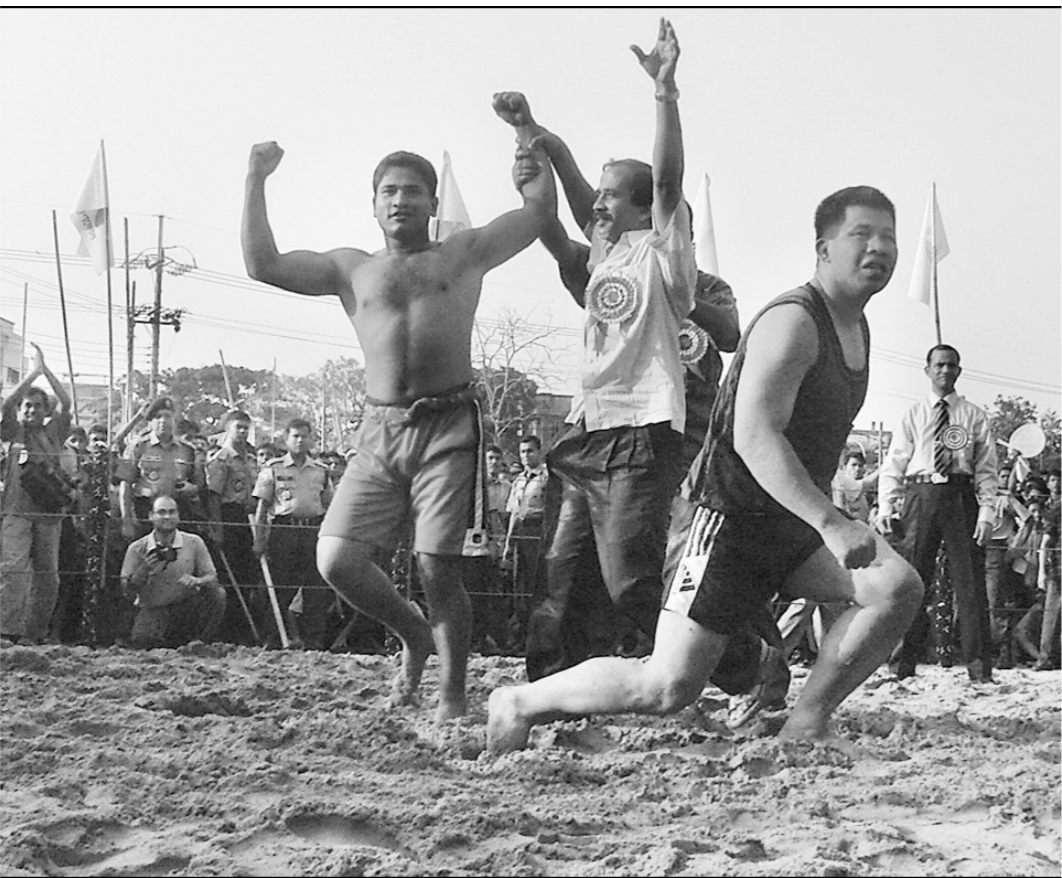


PHOTO: STAR

Didar Boli (L) raises his arms after beating long-time rival Marma Singha Tripura (R) in a bout of the historic Jabbar Boli Khela that lasted just seven minutes at the Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong on Wednesday.

# Didar boli champion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Didarul Alam Didar of Cox's Bazar retained his crown for the third consecutive time in the near century-old wrestling competition Jobbarer Boli Khela defeating Marma Sing Tripura in the port city yesterday afternoon.

Having shared the 'prestigious' title twice with Marma in 2005 and 2006, the 28-year-old Didar was adamant and confident this year to clinch the title and took hard and extra preparation for the past few months.

Of the 58 participants, 52 bolis (wrestlers) took part in the first round and four competed in the challenge bout of the competition organised by Jobbar Smriti Boli Khela O Baishakhi Mela Parishad in the city's Laldighi Maidan.

Didar and Marma Sing then moved to the final or the championship round defeating Mokhter Hossain and Mohammed Liakat, both hailing from Mirsarai upazila, respectively in the challenge bout.

Didar took just one minute to beat his old rival Marma, who failed

to withstand the tactics enforced by his opponent. Enayet Bazar Ward Commissioner and sports organiser MA Malek conducted the battle.

It was the fourth overall title won by Didar, a trader from Omkhali under Ramu upazila in Cox's Bazar district. He also won the championship title (jointly) with then defending champion Siddique of Ukhiya in 2003. He lost to Marma in 2004 before bouncing back again.

Marma, a sub inspector of Gulshan Police Station in Dhaka, won the championship three years in a row from 2004 to 2006.

An over-joyous Didar told The Daily Star yesterday that a change in strategy this time paid off.

Didar said he regularly takes physical exercise to keep his body fit.

Participation of veteran wrestlers, Shahid, 50, and Mafiz, 47, added attraction to the competition but their challenge ended in a tie.

Four adolescents Nur Nabi (12), Rabiul Hoque (14), Saddam (13) and Sabbir (15) also competed in the special round.

Grameenphone, sponsor of the

competition for the first time, distributed Tk 10,000 and Tk 5,000 to the champion and runner-up respectively while each of the 26 winners of the first round pocketed Tk 500.

Abdul Jobbar Sowdagar, a well-known merchant of Chittagong's Anderkilla area, introduced the age-old competition in 1909 (Bangla year 1316) with a view to organise the local youths to fight against then British imperial rule.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mainur Rahman Chowdhury was chief guest at yesterday's competition with former ward commissioner of Chittagong City Corporation Anwar Hossain Mamun in the chair.

Deputy Commissioner (Port) Mohammad Aziz and Grameenphone Deputy Director (Head of Commercial) Bidyut Kumar Basu were present as special guests.

On the occasion of the Jobbarer Boli Khela, a four-day 'Baishakhi Mela' started on Tuesday in and around the Laldighi Maidan.

## Tharanga thanks captain, coach

AFP, Kingston

Upul Tharanga, who was in danger of being dropped for Sri Lanka's World Cup semifinal against New Zealand, answered his critics in style with a fighting 73 in his team's total of 289-5.

The opener, who went into Wednesday's match with just 17 runs to his name in his previous three innings, was expected to be replaced by veteran former skipper Marvan Atapattu.

But the 22-year-old left-hander made his 73 off 74 balls and was quick to pay tribute to captain Mahela Jayawardene and coach Tonn Moody for sticking by him.

"The captain and the coach came to me and told me I was playing and that gave me a lot of confidence," said Tharanga who was his side's second highest scorer behind Jayawardene's blistering unbeaten 115.

"They believed in me as did everyone else in the team. So I'm very happy but I was a little disappointed to get out."

Tharanga was eventually third man out with the total on 111 in the 26th over when he was bowled around his legs by spinner Daniel Vettori.

"It was difficult to play shots as the ball got older. You have to wait for the ball to come on."

## 'What's wrong in endorsing products'

PTI, Thiruvananthapuram

Cricket Board's decision to put a ceiling on players' endorsements may have stirred a hornet's nest but speedster S Sreesanth insists appearing in advertisements does not affect their on-field performance.

"What's wrong if we do it? Cricket is a religion in India; it is not like in other countries... And it (endorsements) will not affect the performance," he said.

"For example, Sachin drinks Boost (in an advertisement). If you can sell a product why not do it? Advertisements will not affect the performance for sure," Sreesanth added.

Interacting with students of Balasahithya Institute here last evening, Sreesanth said India's first-round exit from the World Cup was disappointing but added "cricket is not going to end with the World Cup." On not getting a chance to play even a single match in the World Cup, Sreesanth said, "all wishes need not necessarily materialise, but I am confident that my day will come." He said hitting South African pacemen Andre Nel's delivery for a six during the India-South Africa Test in Johannesburg earlier this year was the most proud moment in his career.

"Nel was bullying me verbally throughout the match. The moment I came to the crease for batting, he provoked me saying he could smell blood... I enjoyed the moment when I hit him for six," he said.

He said it was a glad moment in his career when he took the wicket of the West Indies star batsman Brian Lara, that too in the same ground where Lara scored 400.

To a question on what was his greatest wish, he said, "I would like to open with Sachin Tendulkar. Who knows I will not get a chance," he added.

## 5 hatricks

FROM PAGE 17

Pabna blanked Rajbari 3-0, Khulna edged Gopalganj 2-1, Tangail beat Manikganj by a solitary goal and BKSP defeated Barisal 2-0.

In other matches, Sylhet shared points with Kishoreganj in a 1-1 draw while Rangamati held home side Noakhali 2-2.

## United clinch

FROM PAGE 20

pass into the box set him up for the equaliser, the Brazilian's superb first touch carrying him past three United defenders surrounding him to the corner of the six-yard box, from where his second swept the ball beyond Edwin van der Sar's left hand and into the far corner of the net.

Then, eight minutes from half-time, the Brazilian muscled Fletcher off the ball on the left of the box and turned inside, generating a panic in United's makeshift defence which resulted in Gabriel Heinze and Evra running into each other, leaving Kaka with the simple task of side-footing the ball past van der Sar.

Milan's playmaker might have completed his hatrick as his side threatened on the counter attack early in the second half.

However Kaka admitted that their energy had sapped after the hour mark.

"We stopped playing in the last half hour and I also felt my own performance dip," said Kaka.

"But we can take a lot of encouragement from tonight's performance, and that will fire us up for the second leg."

Their sudden dip saw United take control and a delightful flick from Paul Scholes allowed Rooney to chest the ball down on the edge of the six-yard box before tucking away the equaliser to set the stage for his own late heroics.

# 'We were outclassed'

AFP, Kingston



ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming admitted his side had been completely outclassed by Sri Lanka after the Asian side cruised into the World Cup final on Tuesday.

Sri Lanka, riding on the back of an unbeaten 115 by skipper Mahela Jayawardene, wrapped up an 81-run win and will now face either Australia or South Africa in Saturday's final in Barbados.

"We were outclassed," said Fleming after his side were bowled out for 208 chasing 290 to win at Sabina Park.

"They have some big game players and a lot of heavy artillery in their bowling line-up.

"We had hoped to restrict them to the mid-200s but Mahela played a great innings and we conceded 100 runs in the last 10 overs -- that was very poor.

"The margin of victory was about right."

Jayawardene had won the toss and elected to bat and Sri Lanka made the most of a wayward display by spearhead Shane Bond who finished with 1-59 off his 10 overs.

In stark contrast, Sri Lanka's opening pair Chaminda Vaas and Lasith Malinga bowled two impressive, mean opening spells as New Zealand were limited to 30-1 off the first 10 overs.

"Even if we won the toss I don't think it would have changed the result," said Fleming who had a miserable time with the bat being lbw to Malinga for just one in the second over.

"Vaas and Malinga bowled great opening spells and that's where the match was won and lost. Then Murali (4-31) came on. We gave him an opening and it's rare that he doesn't take it."

Jayawardene said making a century was not on his mind when he came to the crease at 67-2 in the

14th over.

"I'm pretty happy with my century. I knew I had to stay there a long time and try and bat the 50 overs but getting a hundred wasn't on my mind.

"Still, it was good to connect with the bat on such a small ground.

"We have been playing really good cricket and we wanted to stick to the basics when it came to bowling and build some good partnerships when it came to batting."

Muttiah Muralidaran went to the top of the wicket-taking list in the tournament with 4-31 with his 'doosra' playing a crucial role.

"I thought I would use the doosra, the batsmen are using the sweep so I knew they would get a top edge," he said.

"I am also bowling a lot around the wicket now to right hand batsmen and that helps me because it makes it harder for them to see the ball.

"I hope it keeps working for me in the future."

# Nixon awaits fate

SPORTINGLIFE, undated



ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007

England's World Cup wicket-keeper Paul Nixon is waiting to see if he features under new coach Peter Moores.

The 36-year-old was one of England's few successes in the Caribbean, and before that the Commonwealth Bank Series in Australia.

Moores will meet skipper Michael Vaughan before any decisions are made, with a strategy for who takes the gloves expected to be on the agenda.

"It will be interesting to see what new ideas Peter Moores has. Everyone has learnt a lot from this trip and it's important we learn from the past to make us better for the future," said Nixon.

Duncan Fletcher, Moores's predecessor, took years to develop a team to win the Ashes, and Australia's return to England in 2009 and the World Cup in 2011 are the long-term goals to work towards.

It places Nixon in a strange position. His inventive batting and presence behind the stumps was a positive aspect of England's winter but as a veteran he may not be expected to make the next World Cup.

As a fitness fanatic, 'Badger' would probably back himself to be in shape for the next tournament. At the very least he wants to be part of the England set-up this summer, which could lead to a Test debut.

"If selected it would be a dream, but it all depends on the management selection," said Nixon. "Time will tell what will happen and if play."

Chris Read and Geraint Jones struggled behind the stumps in the 5-0 whitewash Down Under in the winter, while Matt Prior and James Foster are considerations.

Steven Davies of Worcestershire is seen as a long-term candidate but is only 20, all adding to intrigue in how Moores will handle his long-term strategy.

Nixon staked his claim despite England's meek exit from the World Cup.

He was among those who arrived back in the country on

Wednesday, most of the squad looking bleary-eyed and slightly dazed after their long-haul flight from the Caribbean.

"Is somebody famous arriving," asked one person waiting for family. When told it was England's World Cup squad she added: "What, the soccer team?"

Nixon will have the chance to impress in county cricket before the first of four Tests against West Indies starts in less than a month. The Test series is followed by two Twenty20 internationals and a one-day series later in the summer.

England's squad was still relatively young at the World Cup and Nixon remained upbeat about the future.

"I've loved every minute of it," he said. "As a team we've probably slightly underachieved but to finish fifth in the world with a lot of inexperienced lads in world cricket, compared to everyone else, we've got to proud of what we've done."



PHOTO: AFP

England wicketkeeper Paul Nixon walks past an armed security officer as he leaves the baggage area at London's Gatwick Airport yesterday. England cricket team returned home from the World Cup in Caribbean yesterday.

# Captain Fantastic

FROM PAGE 17

Earlier, Sri Lanka opener Upul Tharanga struck a tournament best 73 as his team recovered well after Jayasuriya fell for one.

Crucially, Sri Lanka lost just one wicket to strike bowler Shane Bond, returning after missing Friday's 215-run thrashing by Australia with a stomach illness.

The quick conceded 59 runs and he dropped Jayawardene, who led a charge that saw 102 runs scored off the last 10 overs.

At the halfway stage, Sri Lanka had been well-placed for a big total at 111 for three.

But next ball they lost Tharanga when the left-hander was bowled

sweeping by Vettori for a 73 made off 74 balls with one six and nine fours.

Jayawardene subsequently drove Oram, fit again after a heel injury, over his head for six.

His sweep against off-spinner Patel was dropped by Bond on the deep backward square leg boundary, the ball bouncing out of the fieldsman's hands before hitting the rope for a six.

Jayawardene went to his hundred, off 104 balls, with a superb late cut boundary against Oram before pulling Bond for six as the bowler's last over went for 17.

## ZEALAND V SRI LANKA SCOREBOARD

FROM PAGE 17

McCullum c Silva b Muralidaran	0	1	1	0	0
McMillan b Jayasuriya	25	36	20	1	2
Vettori lbw b Muralidaran	0	5	4	0	0
Franklin not out	30	57	38	2	0
Bond b Muralidaran	2	6	4	0	0
Patel c Fernando b Dilshan	34	33	38	2	1
Extras: (b-5, lb-2, w-8, nb-6)	21				
Total: (All out in 41.4 overs)	208				
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-32, 3-105, 4-114, 5-114, 6-115, 7-116, 8-144, 9-149, 10-208.					

Bowler	O	M	R	W	NB/W
Vaas	8	1	25	1	w-1
Malinga	7	2	21	1	nb-1
Fernando	5	0	45	0	nb-5, w-1
Muralidaran	8	0	31	4	w-1
Jayasuriya	9	0	57	2	w-3
Dilshan	4.4	0	22	2	w-1

Result: Sri Lanka won by 81 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Mahela Jayawardene.

Toss: Sri Lanka

Umpires: R Koertzen (South Africa) and S Taufel (Australia)

Match referee: M Procter (South Africa)

## Fleming quits

FROM PAGE 17

Vettori for this tournament, he will certainly come into discussion."

However, with coach John Bracewell's contract now up for review, Fleming added: "But there's going to be a lot of change within New Zealand cricket.

"I'm not sure what John's doing, the selectors are doing, so it's probably a bit presumptuous to recommend Daniel but he's done a fine job up to this point."

And he said that having separate captains for the Test and one-day teams would not be a source of tension. "I've thought long and hard about that. I'm positive it's the right way.

"It gives a guy who takes over the captaincy reins a chance to work on that before taking the Test reins rather than putting him into the deep end."

Fleming, widely regarded as one of the best tacticians currently in world cricket, said he's enjoyed the "subtleties" of captaincy.

"Being able to fend the media off for 10 years is a feather in the cap," he joked. "But when you work players out, that's what I get the most joy from."

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene, whose unbeaten 115 was the centrepiece of his side's conclusive victory, said "Stephen's been a great leader for quite some time now.

"Even when I started he was captaining. You could learn a lot from him. With the resources he's had, he's built up a very decent team.

"He's been one of the top captains for the last 10 years."