

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 to 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 weekend'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

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to be very lucky."

Crowe said he was disappointed that the New Zealand players didn't seem to be hard-hitting 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 SNIPS

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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.

MAJABBAR TENNIS

Amol Roy and Pritul 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 Pritul 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 Sabir 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.

Flemo tired

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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 nothings 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

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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."



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

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 Tom 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

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 Sowdagor, 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 Maman in the chair.

Deputy Commissioner (Port) M o h a m a d A z i z a n d Grameenphone Deputy Director (Head of Commercial) Bidyut Kumar Basu were present as special guests.

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

Grameenphone, sponsor of the

gained at a high cost if the "product" is seen to be less attractive than it should be. The best cricketers in the world need a proper framework to display their skill but to those following from afar, the tournament has seemed indeterminable. And for an otherwise dull to watch. Not because the cricket lacks skill or passion, especially in a tournament as important as the World Cup, but simply because the nature of the limited-over game is that, a bit like a game of squash between opponents of different standards, matches are too often one-sided. When, like the game at Kensington Oval on Saturday, the match goes almost to the final ball, the excitement is matched by little else in sport.

The BBC highlights of the first 48 of the 51 matches in this World Cup have been attracting audiences consistently close to a million viewers sometimes more despite being transmitted after 11pm. It shows that interest in the tournament has been considerable, even in a country whose campaign lacked spark until it was too late. But all concerned with the tournament in the West Indies and certainly those watching at home are agreed on one thing: a seven-week tournament is too long.

The painfully slow build-up to next Saturday's climax invites two important questions. How can the World Cup be made shorter next time and, even more fundamentally, what is its purpose?

The ICC has a clear answer to the second. It believes, rightly or wrongly, that it has a mission, as Malcolm Speed, the chief executive, puts it, to "grow" the game, to spread it further and deeper through the world. "ICC revenue underpin the finances of the majority of our 97 members so optimising revenues is crucial to the growth of the sport," he said.

The commercial success of the world's governing body is not in doubt. The snag is that it tends to put the cart before the horse: to consider the bottom line financially before looking after the attraction of the game itself. Next time it may not be necessary to have reserve days for weather but travelling over the vast differences of the sub-continent is lengthy and tiring. There needs to be another change to the format and despite the success of Ireland the first decision has to be to reduce the number of countries.

Even with 16, Ireland's win over Pakistan and Bangladesh's over

India were all that was required to produce two unexpected teams in the last eight.

In 1992, generally agreed to be the best tournament since the first one, nine teams played each other to produce four semifinalists but there were 39 games in a month and rain produced inequities. The development of second-tier countries such as Ireland and Kenya has been an ICC success and it has gone too far to abandon now. In 2011 there should be 12 nations, playing in two seeded groups of six, the two top in each group going through to a semifinal. A month's cricket and 34 matches would serve the game better.

(Christopher Martin-Jenkins wrote this article for Times Online)

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