

Football back to Kashmir after 30 years

AFP, Srinagar

A major Indian football tournament is returning to Kashmir after nearly three decades amid a decline in insurgency-related violence, officials said Friday.

The Santosh Trophy, a popular national event, will be held in summer capital Srinagar, the urban hub of Kashmir's Muslim insurgency.

The tournament was last held in the scenic Himalayan state in 1978, almost a decade before rebels launched a deadly separatist revolt.

"Allah willing, the competition for Santosh Trophy will be held in Kashmir in July," said Zamir Ahmad, head of Kashmir's football association.

Indian soccer officials visiting to the region to oversee preparations for the event said the competition would help the game in Kashmir.

"Football is the main game here. I am sure if such a mega event is held here, people would get more involved in football," said Subroto Dutta, vice-president of the All India Football Association (AIFA).

"In the near future, I see a very rosy picture for football in Kashmir. We would do all that is needed to rejuvenate the game in Kashmir."

Kashmiri footballers said they were looking forward to the event.

"It will revive old memories and football in Kashmir," said former captain Majeed Kakroo, one of many Kashmiris who played for India.

The number of insurgency-related deaths has dropped from ten a day in 2001 to two in 2007, due to a peace process in place between India and Pakistan since 2004.

Both hold the region in part, but claim it in full. They have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

Royal invite for India, Pakistan

AFP, London

Charles, the Prince of Wales, has invited the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams to play a one-day international match in Glasgow in July for charity, his official residence confirmed on Thursday.

The match, named the Friendship Cup, aims to raise more than 2.5 million pounds (3.7 million euros, 4.9 million dollars) for charities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Britain.

Charles, the heir to the throne, came up with the idea as a way to commemorate India and Pakistan celebrating 60 years of independence from Britain.

The match, set for July 3 at the Citylets Titwood in Glasgow, was confirmed by the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI), the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), and Cricket Scotland.

"This will be an amazing occasion as both our nations have not met outside the World Cup or the ICC Trophy in the United Kingdom," said Lalit Modi, BCCI vice-president.

Sonargaon closer

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equally combative 4-30 by off-spinner Mustakim.

Quraishi, adjudged man-of-the-match, then hit 33 not out to steer Victoria to 241-7 after opener Imrul Kayes (50), Mahmudullah Riyad (49) and Hasanuzzaman Rosel (40) salvaged the side from a precarious 86-4.

SCORES IN BRIEF

**ABAHANIS:** 248-9 in 50 overs (Sadat 1, Zia 20, Nazim 97, Naeem 4, Chandana 57, Shuvo 12, Kuntal 35 n.o., Shahjada 3, Jamil 4, Talha 6, extras 9, Mushfiq 4-37, Mosharrarf 1-54, Murad 1-39, Sanwar 1-19).

**BIMAN:** 250-3 in 46.2 overs (Rokibul 8, Nafis 85, Farhad 127, Mashfiq 6 n.o., Sajjad 9 n.o., extras 15, Shahjada 1-17, Sadat 2-47).

**Result:** Biman won by seven wickets.

**MUHAMMEDAN:** 162 all out in 47.3 overs (Rashedul 24, Junaid 11, Sahagir 38, Rakesh 5, Faisal 10, Sunny 0, Ariful 11, Rezaul 13, Monirul 18, Hasibul 10, Manjurul 3, extras 19, Robin 2-7, Sharif 1-32, Muntasir 2-26, Kapali 1-26, Masudur 2-23).

**SONARGAON:** 163-4 in 42.5 overs (Opee 3, Al-Shahriar 26, Ilias 39, Kapali 57 n.o., Marshall 17, Dhiman 6 n.o., extras 15, Hasibul 1-31, Sunny 1-30).

**Result:** Sonargaon won by six wickets.

**DOHS:** 239 all out in 48.2 overs (Tamim 18, Shamur 41, Ehsanul 75, Nadif 50, Mahmud 2, Razzak 21, Dollar, Shahin 1, Nazmul 5, Nabil 0 n.o., extras 17, Shuvro 1-52, Quraishi 4-36, Sajib 1-35, Mustakim 4-30).

**VICTORIA:** 241-7 in 47.5 overs (Kayes 50, Nasiruddin 12, Mustakim 11, Rahim 7, Riyad 49, Rosel 40, Quraishi 33 n.o., Milon 6, Sabbir 14 n.o., extras 19, Nazmul 2-42, Tikolo 1-35, Razzak 1-48, Nabil 2-34).

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



PHOTO: AFP

Roger Federer of Switzerland returns the ball to Spaniard David Ferrer in the quarterfinal match of the Hamburg Masters yesterday.

Federer in last four

Tennis

AFP, Hamburg

Roger Federer's uncharacteristic struggles continued when he had to fight surprisingly hard to reach the semifinals of the Hamburg Masters with a three-set win over David Ferrer of Spain on Friday.

The world number one had never previously dropped a set in six matches against the 12th-seeded Spaniard, but this time he slipped to within an inch of going break point down in the seventh game of the final set, before surviving 6-3, 4-6, 6-3.

This struggle followed an even tighter three-set battle in Federer's opening match on Wednesday against Juan Monaco, an Argentine ranked outside the top 50, and his loss to an opponent outside the top 50, Filippo Volandri, in the Rome Masters last week.

That setback made it the first time Federer had failed to win a title in four successive tournaments since he became world number one 171 weeks ago.

For a set and a half Federer timed the ball better than at any time since reaching the final in Monte Carlo last month, and he looked well on top of Ferrer until he reached a lead of 4-2 and 30-15 in the second set.

At that stage Federer made one mistake with a forehand and then attempted two ambitious strokes - straightening a diagonal by striking a forehand drive down the line, and launching a spectacular forehand drive volley - and saw both go wide.

He had employed what was arguably the right policy - with a perceived need to dominate opponents a little more, especially Rafael Nadal, on the Parisian clay at the French Open starting later this month - but these three mistakes not only cost him his service game, they allowed Ferrer back into the match.

Suddenly the hard-running Spaniard began to play more confidently, adding new dimensions to a game which was often based around making forehand drives from almost every position on the court.

Ferrer broke Federer again, courtesy of a net approach and a

nicely angled volley, served out comfortably for the second set, and held on hard throughout the first six games of the third set.

It was then that Federer had an important piece of luck. At 3-3, 30-30 on Federer's serve a Ferrer short slice stayed very low, and Federer only managed to get it over the net via the net cord, whence the ball dropped dead.

Ferrer hopped and tossed his racket in frustration, and he never got as close to troubling Federer again, despite fighting bravely to save four break points in the next game.

Federer broke at the fifth attempt with a brilliantly angled short backhand cross court which opened up acres of court for an inevitable forehand winner, and then served out for the match without fuss.

The world number one had certainly had his moments despite the disappointing failure to close out the second set, and he can take comfort from the match practice investment of employing a full range of attacking options - and still surviving.

Inzy rejects tyrant tag

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq on Friday hit back at an official report that described him as a "dictator" and blamed him for the team's disastrous World Cup showing.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) inquiry concluded that Inzamam's attitude was "haughty and that of a dictator" and said he should have been removed as captain before the World Cup.

"I was blamed for being very lenient during my whole captaincy career and now I am turned into a dictator," Inzamam told the Daily Jang.

"That could only be accepted if players had complained that I acted like one."

"This is nothing new in Pakistan cricket. When the team loses, all the blame is put on others, and I was ready for that because it happened in the past," he said, referring to the director of operations say this

ring to Pakistan's equally dismal 2003 World Cup.

"If I had power as captain it was simply because I was a successful captain and whenever I wanted certain player I convinced selectors to get that player and not through dictatorship," said Inzamam.

In March, Pakistan lost their opening match to the hosts West Indies and were then knocked out by minnows Ireland.

Inzamam also questioned the neutrality of the three-man report committee that produced the stinging criticism.

"I know it will sound bitter to them but the presence of two paid members in the probe committee raises doubts over the impartiality of the report," the burly 37-year-old batsman told the BBC's Urdu service.

He said the presence of Salim Altaf and Salahuddin Ahmed, both paid employees of the PCB, on the report committee undermined its conclusions.

"How can a member who was the director of operations say this

now and didn't realise it before the World Cup?" said Inzamam of Altaf.

Inzamam, who resigned as captain and retired from one-day internationals after the tournament, said the report would have no bearing on his future.

"It will be up to the selectors to select me or not. I will feature in the domestic cricket and have been training to play Test cricket. This committee cannot decide my future," he said.

The PCB inquiry, led by former Test player Ijaz Butt, also found that poor planning and lack of discipline were behind Pakistan's performance in the Caribbean.

Inzamam was replaced as captain by Shoaib Malik, who on Friday leads the team in the first of three one-day games against Sri Lanka in Abu Dhabi.

Pakistan's next full series is against South Africa at home in September. They will tour India in November and December before hosting Australia early next year.

Collingwood seizes chance

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flew through the slips.

Runs were coming briskly now, the attack starting to tire and wasting the advantage of the new ball's swing with too many short deliveries, although they did beat the outside edge on occasion.

Collingwood pulled Taylor to go to 97 before a steered four to third man took him to a century in 178 balls with 13 boundaries.

It was the 30-year-old's fourth hundred in 21 Tests and second at Lord's after his 186 against Pakistan last year.

With West Indies' four right-arm seamers unable to break the stand, new captain Ramnaresh Sarwan, leading the side following the retirement of star batsman Brian Lara, reintroduced off-spinner Chris Gayle into the attack.

But medium-pace Dwayne Bravo made the breakthrough when Collingwood played back to a ball that came down the slope and was bowled for 111, England's 'unlucky' number, to leave the hosts 363 for five.

Prior then hit a four through mid-wicket off Bravo.

England, who began Friday on 200 for three after losing the toss, had enjoyed the better of Thursday's play against a West

Indies side now in a lowly eighth place in the world Test rankings.

Cook was 102 not out and Collingwood unbeaten on 21 after the tourists, not helped by a lack of match practice that meant they hadn't bowled any 'live' overs since arriving in England, had failed to exploit Thursday's helpful cloud and pitch conditions fully.

But the bowlers now had the benefit of 56 overs behind them and were the better for it.

Taylor was unlucky when Durham's Collingwood, on 31, drove loosely only for Daren Ganga at gully to drop the two-handed catch.

Soon afterwards Taylor had an lbw appeal against Collingwood, now on 32 and playing no stroke outside off-stump, rejected by Pakistan umpire Asad Rauf.

First change Corey Collumore should have had Collingwood out for 36 when a top-edged hook lobbed towards backward square leg where Taylor dropped the catch.

However, Cook was out to the first chance he offered.

Cook, who had spoken of wanting to follow mentor Graham Gooch's advice and make sure he turned his hundred into a 'big-un', went when a square cut off Taylor was caught at backward point by Bravo.

The 22-year-old left-hander battled for just short of five hours and faced 196 balls with nine boundaries in what was his fifth hundred in 15 Tests.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the second day of the first Test between England and West Indies at Lord's on Friday:

**ENGLAND:** First innings (over-1200-3)

Strauss c Smith b Powell	33
Cook c Bravo b Taylor	105
Shah c Smith b Powell	6
Pietersen c Smith b Collumore	26
Collingwood b Bravo	111
Bell not out	59
Prior not out	5
Extras: (b-4, lb-12, w-9, nb-2)	27
Total: (For 5 wickets in 110 overs) 372	
Fall of wickets: 1-88, 2-103, 3-162, 4-219, 5-363.	

**To bat:** Plunkett, Hoggard, Harmison, Panesar.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Powell	33	9	93	2
Taylor	19	4	87	1
Collumore	30	5	96	1
Bravo	24	8	63	1
Gayle	3	0	13	0
Morton	1	0	4	0

First win

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nine minutes with a 30-yard strike at the Sathkira Stadium while Awal and Ripon added the rest late in the second half to hand Gaibandha their first loss in the finals.

Hosts Sathkira's poor run continued as their second attempt to win a match went down the drains following a goalless draw with Narayanganj.

Both teams came to the game after losing their respective openers and the home side fluffed easy chances. Jahirul wasted sitters either side of the break for Sathkira, who were reduced to ten men when Shahjalal was sent off in the 52nd minute.

Narayanganj also came close but Sohel Rana failed to beat the rival keeper on a one-on-one situation.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

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U-13 CRICKET

CCS defeated Greenfield Spectrum by 73 runs in the Boost Power Cup Under-13 cricket tournament at the Kalabagan Krira Chakra ground. In reply to CCS's 208-6, Greenfield were all out for 135 with man-of-the-match Sayem taking 2-12 after scoring a run-a-ball 30 in the CCS innings.

WOMEN'S CHESS

The Prime Bank second Women's International Rating Chess, organised by Leonie Chess Club, begins today at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room. Interested players have been requested to confirm their entries by 2pm at the federation.

Ischant

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that Sharma would not be sent to South Africa after all.

This latest injury could be a serious blow to Munaf's career. It's worth remembering that Munaf came under a serious cloud of suspicion during India's tour of South Africa where he did not play a part in the majority of the tour and yet remained with the squad. Munaf made a comeback in the final Test, but was clearly well below full fitness, and did not perform to expectations. When India returned from that tour the Board of Control for Cricket in India did not take the Munaf issue lightly.

As soon as India returned from South Africa Niranjan Shah, the secretary of the BCCI, summoned John Gloster, the physio, to the Mumbai offices of the board for a full briefing on what exactly happened with Munaf. The board then raised concerns that Munaf had gone into the final Test carrying an injury and that this might have impacted India's chances. "According to his report Gloster said they had taken all the fitness tests necessary and felt that he was totally fit. I think Rahul (Dravid) and the other members of the team management must also have been convinced of Munaf's fitness before taking him in the eleven," Shah had told Cricinfo back then. "Certain injuries are such that the physio may believe that the player will recover any time. Whether the player has that same confidence or not is something else. The players should be honest with themselves, there's no point blaming the physio."

Most damningly, however, Shah laid the blame squarely at the feet of Munaf in a strong statement. "Then we were surprised, when Dr Anant Joshi conducted tests, and Munaf complained about pain. Joshi then advised a couple of weeks' rest," he said. "Here I am a little concerned about the player himself. The player himself should be honest enough about his own fitness. The last 5% has to come from the player. The doctor cannot say how much pain you are experiencing. Many players can play even with a big injury but some players cannot play even with a small injury. The honesty of the player - at least in the case of Munaf Patel - is in question."

Cook back with bang

Cricket

AFP, London

England opener Alastair Cook marked his return to international cricket in style by scoring 102 not out on the first day of the first Test against West Indies at Lord's here Thursday.

The 22-year-old Essex left-hander was left out of England's World Cup squad and hadn't been involved with the national side since January when their 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia came to an end.

But his fifth Test hundred in 15 matches was typical of the calm assurance that has been such a feature of much of his brief international career.

Cook, who guided England to 200 for three when bad light ended the day's play, had batted for over four hours and faced 173 balls with nine boundaries.

His innings was all the more impressive as West Indies won the toss and chose to field first in overcast, seam-bowler friendly, conditions.

Asked if it was his best innings for England, Cook replied: "It's the one I enjoyed the most."

"You've been watching England play on TV, you want to be there

and then you are part of it. That's why it meant so much today (Thursday)."

England came into this match without injured captain Michael Vaughan and crooked all-rounder Andrew Flintoff.

"It's crucial you start well in the summer. You are in possession and you've got to score as many runs as you can when you can," added Cook, who last year scored a Test century at Lord's against Pakistan.

Cook, who as a schoolboy was coached by former England batsman Derek Randall before coming under the wing of Essex and England opening great Graham Gooch, said: "Every time you get to a hundred, you've got that Goochy voice inside saying 'make it a big un'."

"I've yet to do that really," said the opener whose highest Test score is the 127 against Pakistan he made at Old Trafford last year.

Runs were not easy to come by on a pitch that made strokeplay difficult and with play interrupted by several stoppages on the first day of a four-Test series.

"It was very slow. It was very hard to drive because nothing was really a half-volley out there and it nibbled around a bit," added Cook.

Cook emerged with some credit from the Ashes thrashing, with 116 in the Perth Test. But he said the

tour had been a chastening experience.

"What happened there I wouldn't wish it on anyone's worst enemy. A lot of people went through hell on that tour. But you do learn more from when you do badly than when you do well."

West Indies quick Daren Powell, who led the attack with two for 52, refused to blame a lack of match practice for his side's waywardness in a morning session which finished with England 85 without loss.

"We bowled both sides of the wicket and didn't use the new ball as well as we should. I don't want to blame it on lack of practice. We are professionals and we were all over the place."

But a pep talk at lunch from new captain Ramnaresh Sarwan and stand-in coach David Moore led to an improved performance and Powell, in his first match at Lord's, said he'd no problems with the slope that runs across the ground.

"I heard a lot about the slope but I don't put that in the back of my head. I just focus on the job in hand."

Turning to Cook, he added: "He's a pretty patient batsman. He left a lot of balls outside off the off-stump but I believe in the morning we didn't make him play to our plan and that set him up for a good innings."

England excite AD

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

South Africa Test great Allan Donald has declared an interest in joining the England coaching team.

"I would love to do that job - it's a very high-profile job."

"With all the talent there is in England, around England, it will be fantastic to work with that," he told BBC Five Live.

The England and Wales Cricket Board has indicated that a bowling coach could be recruited to allow Kevin Shine to focus on the national academy.

Shine has been working with the England bowlers since Troy Cooley left after the 2005 Ashes series to become Australia's bowling coach.

But John Carr, the ECB's director of England cricket, said: "When the board recruited Kevin in early 2006, it was always intended to be a largely Loughborough-based role

[at the academy] leading the ECB fast bowling programme, which involves overseeing and managing the development of elite fast bowlers at senior and age group levels."

"Kevin had indicated at the start of the winter that at the end of the World Cup, he wished to revert to the important role that he was originally recruited to perform."

Carr added: "Kevin will continue to be involved with the preparation of England fast bowlers around international matches as well as being involved in any decisions to utilise the services of other fast bowling coaches with England teams or in other parts of the fast bowling programme."

The recruitment of Donald, who took 330 wickets in 72 Tests and 272 in one-day internationals during an illustrious playing career, would undoubtedly strengthen the team around England's new head coach, Peter Moores.

He has already appointed former Zimbabwe captain Andy Flower as his assistant as he looks to get the England team back on

track after the 5-0 whitewash by Australia during the winter, which was followed by a disappointing World Cup performance.

Donald, who spent several seasons with Warwickshire during his career and has coached their young bowlers, applied for the England bowling coach job when Shine was appointed.

"I don't come in with a lot of coaching badges, but I do have lots of experience and passion for the game," he said at the time.

And the 40-year-old remains keen to work with the likes of Steve Harmison, Matthew Hoggard, Andrew Flintoff and Simon Jones.

Chairman of selectors David Graveney was asked about the possibility of Donald working with England during the opening day of the first Test against West Indies on Thursday, but refused to be drawn on the matter.

"Allan Donald has worked in the UK and I suggest you watch that space - the same as I will," he commented.

Kewell on track

AFP, Liverpool



Harry Kewell's bid to make Liverpool's starting line-up for next week's Champions League final has been boosted by

a combination of an injury to Bolo Zenden and a string of impressive displays in training this week.

Reds boss Rafael Benitez revealed on Friday that Dutch midfielder Zenden had turned his ankle during training in Spain this week and could be doubtful for the clash with AC Milan in Athens on Wednesday.

"It will be difficult to say he will be fit for the final now, but I won't say no yet," Benitez said.

Benitez had happier news concerning goalkeeper Jose Reina, who has fully recovered from the shoulder injury he suffered in his side's penultimate Premiership match, at Fulham, which caused him to miss the final league game against Charlton as a precaution.

The Spanish star has trained normally at Liverpool's pre-final base at La Manga in southern Spain

to dispel fears over his fitness.

Benitez admitted that Kewell's recent return to action and the Australian's sharpness has given him a real dilemma over who to play on the flanks against the Italians.

"We certainly have options on both wings, these are the areas I am having to consider carefully," Benitez said. "This involves Bolo (Zenden), Harry (Kewell) and Jermaine (Pennant) and I have not yet made my decision."

Kewell has impressed in training in Spain and, even before Zenden's injury worry emerged, was being considered for the left flank slot the Dutchman occupied in both semifinal legs against Chelsea.

Benitez added: "We looked at all the players in the training camp and in every training session people were talking about Harry Kewell."

"He played well for half an hour against Charlton but we needed to see whether he is fit and then decide if he can play from the start or not. There's a lot for me to decide yet."

"What I know at the moment is that we are focused and we will be

ready. The players are really thinking about this game and you could see in previous matches that as much as you tried to push them, their minds were already on the final."

"The only thing we can do now is to prepare properly for the game and approach it with confidence because it's easy to become nervous or stressed."

Benitez must also decide whether Pennant plays on the right, but he has no intention of giving any indication on that because it would instantly confirm that Steven Gerrard will play in his favoured central midfield role.

The manager could also use John Arne Riise on the left of midfield with Alvaro Arbeloa at full-back.

Benitez has only Luis Garcia and Fabio Aurelio on the injured list, although Mohamed Sissoko's chances of playing have been handicapped by injury.

The Spanish boss told the club's website, www.liverpoolfc.tv, that back-up goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek, the hero of Liverpool's penalty shoot-out win over Milan two years ago, had recovered from a groin injury and would be ready to take his place on the bench in Athens.