

Jr badminton from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The junior and sub-junior badminton tournaments will begin at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium today.

Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury will inaugurate the competition as chief guest at 6pm, while the matches will begin at 9.30 in the morning.

A total of 120 shuttlers including 24 girls from 31 district sports associations and four divisional sports associations will take part in the meet.

Eng struggle

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AFP adds: The match was due to start at 3 pm local time, four hours later than scheduled, after a wet outfield meant no play took place before lunch.

Both sides were unchanged from the teams that drew the first Test at Lord's, where India clung on with one wicket standing before bad light and rain cut short play on Monday's final day.

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly, a senior member of the middle-order, was declared fit after overcoming a slight lower back strain for what was the second of a three-Test series.

India's Sachin Tendulkar started this match needing just 25 more runs to become only the third batsman in history to score 11,000 Test runs after world record-holder Brian Lara (11,953) and Allan Border (11,174), both of whom have now retired.

TEAMS

ENGLAND: Andrew Strauss, Alastair Cook, Michael Vaughan (captain), Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Ian Bell, Matt Prior (wicketkeeper), Chris Tremlett, Ryan Sidebottom, Monty Panesar, James Anderson.

INDIA: Wasim Jaffer, Dinesh Karthik, Rahul Dravid (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, VVS Laxman, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wicketkeeper), Anil Kumble, Zaheer Khan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth.

B. League

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Amalesh Sen's side on the defensive and Russel came close to reduce the margin quite often.

Biplab, who was not required to make a single save in the first half with Abahani enjoying superior ball possession, palmed away efforts by stand-in Russel skipper Bulbul and Nayan while Moroccan striker Noureddine Zaim screwed his shot over the lone keeper after getting the ball near the six-yard box after Pradip's mistimed clearance.

TEAMS

ABAHANI: Biplab, Siraji, Nazrul, Pradip, Mintu, Ujjal, Parvez (Pranotosh), Joy, Abul, Ibrahim and Emily.

RUSSEL: Zia (Niloy), Aminul (Yusuf), Shawkat, Hassan, Mishu, Fetah, Saadane, Nayan, Tanvir, Zaim and Bulbul.

Referee: Mansoor Azad.

Simao signs

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from rival Spanish side Valencia and French champions Lyon for Sabrosa who was part of the Portuguese side that reached the Euro 2004 final and last year's World Cup semi-finals.

Simao, the top scorer in the Portuguese league in 2003, arrived at Benfica in 2001 from Barcelona for a fee of around 13 million euros after two seasons with the Spanish side.

Atletico, who finished seventh in the Primera Liga last season, have now spent nearly 50 million euros on new signings.

They have signed Uruguay striker Diego Forlan from Spanish side Villarreal, Brazilian left wingback from Santos and midfielders Luis Garcia from Liverpool and Raul Garcia from Osasuna.

Heinze calls

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Heinze and Liverpool's case appears to hinge on a written confirmation from United that they would sell him to any club willing to meet their £6 million valuation.

However, despite receiving a bid of the required amount from Rafa Benitez's side, United refuse to allow the player to move to their rivals.

Heinze signed for United in 2004 from Paris St-Germain, and has two years remaining on his contract.

Partizan booted

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appeal.

A week ago in the southern Bosnian town of Mostar during the match with Zrinjski, Partizan Belgrade's fans provoked incidents with supporters of the host team.

Twenty-seven policemen and nine fans were injured in the clashes after the match that ended with Zrinjski's 6-1 defeat.

Matches between Bosnian Croat and Muslim teams and those from neighbouring Serbia are treated as high risk events, following Bosnia's 1992-95 war that pitted the country's three ethnic groups against each other.

Subject to any appeal, Zrinjski will progress to the second qualifying round.



PHOTO: AFP

South Africa skipper Graeme Smith laughs as he rides a Harley Davidson during the launch of the Twenty20 World Cup in Johannesburg on Thursday. The first world cup of this format of the game will be held in September this year.

Lights on at Lord's

Cricket

AFP, London

Lord's Cricket Ground is to stage its first floodlit match in September, owners Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) announced on Friday.

Temporary floodlights will be installed for the Second Division Pro40 League one-day match between Middlesex, who are based at Lord's, and Derbyshire on September 10.

Keith Bradshaw, the Australian secretary and chief executive of MCC, said: "MCC is delighted to be hosting its first floodlit match at Lord's. We are pleased that Westminster Council has approved the use of temporary floodlights for the September 10 encounter and are greatly looking forward to

hosting another big occasion.

"This will be an historic match for all concerned, which I'm sure will prove popular with members and public alike," he added of a fixture that had been switched from its original venue of Southgate, Middlesex's 'second' home ground, in north London.

"Lord's is a world-class venue and we're always looking at ways to maintain and improve our facilities. A match under temporary floodlights will not only end the season at Lord's on a high note, but will provide us with very useful information with regards the staging of such matches here."

England is due to host the World Twenty20 in 2009 with the inaugural edition taking place in South Africa this September.

Twenty20 matches, pioneered in England, have propped popular

with spectators wanting to watch cricket after office hours and that has led them to requiring floodlights with some matches ending when daylight is fading.

Lord's, which styles itself as the "home of cricket", may feel floodlights are required to maintain its pre-eminent position among English cricket venues although it has been thought in the past that objections from local residents and Westminster Council would prevent permanent structures being built around the ground.

Several grounds in England already have permanent floodlights including Hampshire's Rose Bowl ground, Hove -- the home of county champions Sussex -, Chelmsford, Essex's headquarters east of London, Derby and Cardiff.

Ireland make it to U-19 WC

BBC ONLINE, undated

Ireland qualified for the 2008 ICC U19 World Cup in Malaysia after beating Scotland by six wickets in Belfast to win the round-robin European qualifier.

Ben Ackland stroked an unbeaten 71 and opener Chris Dougherty (36) helped the Ireland ease home chasing the revised target of 150 in 32 overs.

It will be Ireland captain Greg Thomspon's third successive appearance in the U19 World Cup.

Ireland finished 13th from the participating 16 teams back in 2006.

"It is a fantastic achievement because we desperately wanted to qualify for the Kuala Lumpur event which we have done with flying colours," said Thompson.

"The team is shaping well and we look to be heading in the right direction.

"We know it will be a tougher competition in Malaysia but the way we are performing and peaking, I am confident that we will be able to put up some strong performances."

Ireland's crucial game against Scotland at Osborne Park was delayed by rain which it reduced to a 34 overs contest.

Scotland, put into bat, recovered from a top order collapse to reach a competitive 157 in its 34 overs.

Bayern sweat

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hardman's conduct is being studied by the German Football Association's (DFB) disciplinary committee after a clash with Stuttgart captain Fernando Meira.

Referee Babak Rafati missed the incident, but the matter is being investigated by the DFB and both players have given statements.

Meanwhile, Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni is struggling with the right knee injury he picked up in a pre-season friendly earlier this month and was expected to resume training on Wednesday.

The injury has taken longer to heal than expected and will not train until Saturday at the earliest and is running out of time to prove his fitness in order to play in the season opener against Hansa Rostock on August 11.

Asia Trophy

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Portsmouth some unexpected pre-season silverware.

Earlier Northern Ireland striker David Healy scored his debut goal for new club Fulham in a 4-1 rout of Hong Kong minnows South China in the match for third place.

Papa Boupa Diop, Carlos Bocanegra and Brian McBride were also on target for the Cottagers while Flavio Barros found the net for South China.

Healy, a 1.5 million-pound signing from Leeds, had a sharp shot saved before Boupa Diop met a swinging Frank Queudrue free-kick unmarked to head Fulham's opener on 21 minutes.

Just after half-time, Fulham skipper Bocanegra punished South China's weakness under high balls with a straight-forward headed goal from a corner.

South China showed the resolve that made Liverpool sweat as Li, for once opting to cross from a free-kick, picked out Flavio Barros who sprung the offside trap and planted his shot past Anti Niemi.

But Healy, who has a record 29 goals for Northern Ireland, buried any thoughts of a revival when he headed in Alexei Smertin's cross on 74 minutes.

Smertin combined slickly with substitute Steven Davis for Fulham's fourth and final goal as the pair set up Brian McBride for a simple finish.

ICL gaining edge

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The chatter is louder than Matt Prior in full flow: Brian Lara is on board, Shane Warne has expressed his desire to jump on and is that Glenn McGrath in the distance? There's a possibility that these three, and other stars, will play Twenty20 cricket -- itself a novelty -- in India as part of the Indian Cricket League (ICL).

Though all three have retired from international cricket, Warne is active on the county circuit, Lara looks to have gas in his tank still, and anyone who saw McGrath bowl in his last international match, the World Cup final, would find it hard to believe that he has reached pensionable age.

That's only half the story; the other half is the ICL's running battle with the Board for Control of Cricket in India, aka the Bureaucratic Custodians of Cricket in self-interest. The BCCI has rejected the idea of the ICL and has asked everyone it has control over -- which is pretty much the entire cricket establishment, home and away -- to steer clear, Or else.

The board's proprietary stand over cricket in India is, at the very least, at odds with ground realities. The farcical way it runs the national team is well known; less documented, though perhaps more damaging, is how it runs all other levels of cricket in the country. And all other aspects, from umpires to ground scheduling.

The board's objection has little to do with the ICL being a privately run league. There are hundreds of those in India; among the most famous are Mumbai's Times League and Kanga League, which have coexisted with the official system for years, functioning as finishing schools for some of Mumbai's best players, and hugely benefiting Indian cricket. The key difference between those and the ICL is this: the ICL involves television programming, and so treads directly on the BCCI's turf. All else flows from there.

The ICL will be based on the Twenty20 game, the least developed of cricket's three formats in India. The first edition of the BCCI's own Twenty20 tournament sank without a trace, shunted to the end of the domestic calendar last season, when it was in direct competition to the World Cup in the Caribbean. Few recall who won, fewer still care. Least of all, apparently, the BCCI itself: India's provisional squad for the Twenty20 World Championship in South Africa later this year has precisely three representatives from the two domestic finalist teams. That's three among 30 players, and it's anyone's guess if any will make the final cut.

The opportunity now stares the board in the face. It can outsource the administration of Twenty20 cricket to the ICL, and let the new league throw up a pool of players who can be cherry-picked for the national team. Unlike the established players, they will have specialised in the shortest version of the game. Also, they will have picked up skills not only from the likes of Lara and McGrath but also from, say, Stuart Law, a key member of the Lancashire team that is a serious contender for this year's Twenty20 Cup in England.

The BCCI has never been hot on nurturing a system; the rise of one-day cricket in India -- even the World Cup victory 24 years ago -- has been more by accident than design. By embracing the ICL, the board can feed off a system that is already in place and is effectively someone else's headache. This way, it can focus on its core competence -- making money.

Over in the West Indies, the umbrella cricket board has, after a year's resistance, bought into Allen Stanford's vision for cricket in the region. Last year the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) stymied the grand finale of the Stanford 20/20 tournament, an all-stars game between the best of the West Indians and a South African side for a \$5million purse. Stanford bit his lip and tried again, and the upshot is that the next season has the WICB on board, Cricket Australia and Cricket South Africa interested, and

the ICC worried.

The ICL's biggest problem currently is the lack of a venue, with the BCCI leaning heavily on those who own stadiums, at home or abroad, to close all doors to the rebels or risk losing India matches. But the ICL can well flex its own muscles and simply make the down payment on a ten-year lease. Money is not the problem now, and the suits at the BCCI are amateurs against the industrial strength of the Zee group the ICL's backers.

Zee can learn from Stanford here. If the BCCI continues to hold out and play the neighbourhood bully, the ICL, which has already tied up with a leading infrastructure development company, could simply build its own workspace. Stanford's complex, near the airport in Antigua, includes a cricket ground, banks, restaurants, a health club with swimming pool, gym, and aerobics studios; a hotel and conference centre are in the works.

In fact, there is a precedent closer home, in the form of the Sahara group, which has built a plush mini-city in the forbidding rocky hills near Pune in western India, and then attracted a host of big names in sport -- Daley Thompson, Anna Kournikova, Boris Becker, Nadia Comaneci and Edwin Moses among them -- as brand ambassadors.

Other problems, including hiring players, can be dealt with similarly. The BCCI could yet be hoist by its own petard: its failure to invest in a cricketing culture, and the resulting lack of viable opportunities for former cricketers could make any option seem attractive. The carrot of a pension when they eventually retire -- approximately Rs 35,000 a month -- will not mean as much to a Ganguly or a Laxman as the chance of playing with some big names.

That it should come down to this zero-sum game is a pity. Indian cricket is big enough for two players, or 20, or 200, and it would help if they were pulling in the same direction. Instead of cutting its nose off to spite its face, the BCCI should wake up and smell the coffee -- and the opportunity.

Blake makes another quarterfinal

Tennis

AFP, Indianapolis

James Blake reached his third quarterfinal in his past four events on Thursday with an efficient 6-4, 6-2 victory over Ricardo Mello at the Indianapolis tennis championships.

Blake, seeded second behind American compatriot Andy Roddick, is defending the title he won here last year with a victory over Davis Cup teammate Roddick in the final.

Blake lost the title match last Sunday at Los Angeles to Czech Radek Stepanek, and is poised for a rise in form in the run-up to the US Open starting August 27.

The 27-year-old said he likes the state of his game as he advances on the hardcourts.

"It was a tentative start, we were feeling each other out," Blake said of his 149th-ranked opponent in a match played with Super Bowl-winning Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy in the audience.

"I had to attack and not fall into playing his game. He's a guy who can beat you if you do that."

Blake fired eight aces, never faced a break point and broke the Brazilian three times as he won in 66 minutes.

"I opened my game up a bit at the end," said the winner. "After the first break of serve through, I felt the

match was mine to take."

Blake moved into a showdown with American youngster Sam Querrey, who toppled towering Croatian Ivo Karlovic 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (8/6) as two of the tallest men in tennis met in the second round.

Querrey, the world number 90, reached his third quarterfinal of the season after Memphis and Las Vegas back-to-back in February and March.

The Californian teenager saved match points at this level for the first time in his career as he won the ace-fest in two hours, 20 minutes.

The victory was a repeat of a first round win against the Croatian five months ago in Memphis.

Karlovic at 2.08 metres and Querrey, at 1.98, powered down tree-top serves with the American producing 14 aces and his opponent three more.

Two victories this week in the opening stages of the pre-US Open

hardcourt season have wiped away bitter memories for Querrey of seven defeats in a row he suffered over recent months.

"It feels great to be in a quarterfinal again," he said.

Third seed Dmitry Tursunov threw away a hopeless second set to prepare for a definitive third, beating fellow Russian Teimuraz Gabashvili in a first-time meeting 6-3, 0-6, 6-2.

"Down 5-0 in the second, I really didn't have much of a chance in that set," said the winner. "I was just looking forward to getting into the third."

"My strategy was not to get broken early."

Tursunov reached the quarterfinals for the first time since two round of eight appearances on grass in June.

He next plays Kei Nishikori after the Japanese qualifier ousted German Michael Berrer 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.



PHOTO: INTERNET

James Blake smiles at a fan during his second round match against Brazil's Ricardo Mello at the Indianapolis Tennis Championships on Thursday. Blake won 6-4, 6-2.