

FIFA medical course from today

UNB, Dhaka

The FIFA Football Medicine Course, organised by Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) with support from FIFA, begins at the BFF Bhahan today.

Thirty trainee doctors from across the country, including seven females, will take part in the five-day course.

The course will be held from 9:00 am to 4:15pm everyday. Dr Gurucharan Singh, sports medical committee member of the FIFA and acting director of AFC's sports medicine department, will conduct the course.

Dr Mohammad Omar Faruq will act as the local coordinator.

Besides, specialists from the city's PG Hospital, Birdem, DMCH and other hospitals will deliver lectures on different aspects of football medicines.

School kho kho starts today

UNB, Dhaka

The 5th Blazer BD School Kho Kho Competition begins today at the Outer Stadium Kho Kho ground.

Bangladesh Kho Kho Federation vice-president ASM Ali Kabir is expected to inaugurate the meet.

A total of 18 schools will take part in the boys and girls' divisions of the competition. In the boys' group, 12 teams -- split into four groups -- will compete in the league basis match. Later, four top teams from each group will qualify for the semifinal.

In the girls' group, six teams -- divide into two groups -- will play in the league basis match. Both champions and runners-up from each group will advance to the semifinal.

Sponsor Blazer BD will provide Tk 50,000 of the total budget of Tk 98,000 for the competition.

Tournament committee secretary Faruque Dhali disclosed the details of the tournament at a press conference at the National Sports Council (NSC) conference room Wednesday afternoon.

Full marks for Gazirchot

SPORTS REPORTER

Gazirchot SC defeated Government Printing Press 2-1 in yesterday's Third Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Both the matches at the Outer Stadium ended in draws. Friends Social Welfare and Mirpur Ekadash settled for 1-1 while Dilkusha and Euro Famous failed to score in 90 minutes.

Lacking English

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Williams added: "I have read the predictions that wages will not rise dramatically but my feeling is that wages will grow very considerably this year.

"The market is buoyant because of the TV money, there is an ability to pay and a willingness to invest."

Williams pointed out that it was not just the big clubs splashing out and that in terms of net spending, Arsenal and Chelsea had actually earned more than they had spent in transfers during the summer.

Great season

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"I maintain that position until the end."

The 23-year-old midfielder has inherited David Beckham's number 23 shirt at Real following the Englishman's move to America this summer.

Sneijder, with his dead-ball expertise and superb range of passing and shooting, has been likened to the former Manchester United ace, but the Holland international insists he wants to be seen as his own man.

"I don't like these things because I don't like to be compared with other players," he said. "He has his qualities, I have mine and we are different players."

Wiese slams

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"I have top national and international achievements (with Bremen) and I do not understand why I am overlooked," the unorthodox Wiese told German tabloid Bild.

"Instead, Hildebrand, who sits on the bench at Valencia (behind Spanish international Santiago Canizares) is selected or you have Enke, who has often been exposed. And Neuer hasn't played a complete Bundesliga season yet.

"Obviously, I do not fit into the circle of the German Football Association because I am not a conventional mainstream goalkeeper.

"I am not disappointed, but for me the subject of where I stand with Joachim Loew is a closed matter. It's clearly not up for discussion."



PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond during a press conference in Johannesburg yesterday.

A View to a Kill

AFP, Johannesburg



is determined to prove that Twenty20 is not just a batsman's game when he returns to the international stage at next week's World Championships.

Bond has enjoyed a four-month break since starring for the Black Caps in the one-day international World Cup in the Caribbean but he says he will be raring to go when they take on Kenya in their first match on September 12.

"It's nice to get back outside, everybody is looking forward to getting into some training and getting stuck into some cricket," Bond told reporters in Johannesburg.

He said the importance of bowl-

ing in Twenty20 cricket should not be forgotten, and that bowlers had to be as aggressive as batsmen.

"You figure the game's steeped in favour of the batsman, with the nature of the game and the boundaries seem to be getting shorter and shorter," he said.

"But I think you have got to go out with the attitude of bowling aggressively and looking to take wickets."

After finally enjoying an injury-free run, Bond had an outstanding World Cup in March and April when his 13 wickets were the most economical of any bowler.

"It's funny, I looked to bowl with almost a defensive mindset in the world cup and that worked for me. I still believe that to win the game you need to take wickets and that's how our team is going to approach it."

He said the team had discussed

their bowling attack, and variety would be key.

"If you bowl a good bouncer it can almost be a dot ball per over. You can't just continue to pitch the ball up and bowl one style and basically allow the batsmen to suit themselves and have a free sweep."

He said the pressure on him as a bowler was actually less, as "there is almost an expectation you are going to get smacked around the park."

"I think people expect batters are going to win the game, but if our bowlers can bowl well then we can set the tournament up for the whole team."

After their match against Kenya, New Zealand are due to play their fellow group one rivals Sri Lanka in Johannesburg on September 15.

Rugby bigger than Bush

AFP, Sydney

He's a good friend and ally but when it came down to choosing between the US leader and rugby league, sport was the winner for Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

So when US President George W. Bush and his huge entourage touched down on Air Force One in Sydney late Tuesday, they were met not by his close ally on Iraq but by Howard's deputy Mark Vaile.

The reason? Howard was at a rugby league awards dinner.

A passionate fan of the sport who supports Sydney-based Saint George's Dragons, he spent the evening at the Dally M awards, the Australian National Rugby League's annual showpiece at Sydney's Town Hall.

"I have got to get my priorities right. No disrespect, he's (Bush) my good friend but this is rugby league," he told reporters.

Howard, who has seen his popularity ratings plummet due to his support of the US-led invasion of Iraq, played for his school at rugby and cricket.

Bush, who was accompanied here by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, flew in for a summit of Asia Pacific leaders.

Ponting still

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"We're not 100% sure when (he'll fly out). We'll be in touch with him day by day and he'll let us know what's going on then. I wouldn't think that he's going to miss the whole tournament. I'm pretty sure he'll be here at some stage."

Ponting did not leave Australia with the rest of the squad on Monday due to "private family reasons". Gilchrist said Stuart Clark, who also remained at home to care for his ill son, was expected to join the group "in the next day or so". Uncertainty remained over Shane Watson's part in the tournament after he stayed in Brisbane to have a minor hamstring problem monitored.

INDIA: Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Robin Uthappa, Ramesh Powar, Ajit Agarkar, Piyush Chawla, Zaheer Khan; England

Chandana 'treated harshly'

AFP, Colombo

All-rounder Upul Chandana, one of Sri Lanka's 1996 world cup winning team, on Wednesday announced he had quit international cricket and accused the selectors of treating him shabbily.

"I was hoping to get selected for the world cup after doing consistently well in domestic cricket. It did not happen and when I was not selected for the Twenty-20 I thought I should quit playing international cricket", Chandana, 35 told reporters.

"I feel I was treated very unfair by the administrators", said the leg spinner who had had a season with the English county Gloucestershire.

Chandana said he had not been approached by the unofficial Indian Cricket League (ICL). "I will have to think about it then (if approached)," he said.

The lower-order batsman played 16 Tests between 1999 and 2005 and 147 one-day internationals between 1994 and 2007.

His name, along with that of Sanath Jayasuriya, Russel Arnold and former captain Marvan Atapattu, has been linked with the ICL.

The Indian league, bankrolled by media baron Subhash Chandra, involves Twenty20 cricket featuring foreign and domestic players.

With Sri Lanka warning it will ban any player joining the rebels, no cricketer from the island nation has officially signed up so far.

277 off just 72 balls!

CRICINFO, undated

Sri Lankan first-class player Dhanuka Pathirana scored a remarkable 277 off 72 balls in a Twenty20 match in Lancashire's Saddleworth League to steer his Austerlands side to 366 for 2 and an easy win over Droylsden. Pathirana smashed 29 sixes and 18 fours in his onslaught.

"Everything seemed to hit the middle," Pathirana, who had to borrow a bat as he had left his at home, said. "I was seeing it like a football. It was like a dream... I think I did some serious damage to some of the vehicles in the car park."

"It was unbelievable," Austerlands' Andy Young told the Manchester Evening News. "Dhanuka normally bats at No. 3 but we needed to up our run rate to reach the semi-finals, so we asked him to open and said to him: 'Just go for it'. And he certainly did."

"It was scary to watch and it wasn't on one of the smaller grounds in our league. He is one of those guys who we always knew was capable of a massive innings, but this was incredible."

Beckham's mission

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And while Ferguson feels Beckham will struggle to have the required impact on the field, he claimed the 31-year-old's celebrity persona had overtaken his status as a sportsman following his marriage to Spice Girl Victoria.

When asked if Beckham was difficult to deal with at United, the 65-year-old said: "He was never a problem until he got married. He used to go into work with the academy coaches at night time, he was a fantastic young lad."

"Getting married into that entertainment scene was a difficult thing from that moment his life was never going to be the same."

"He is such a big celebrity; football is only a small part. The big part is his persona."

Riquelme back

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Villarreal hierarchy before last Christmas, the 29-year-old spent the second half of last season on loan at Boca Juniors.

Villarreal did offer an olive branch earlier in the summer when they gave Riquelme a place in the squad, albeit the number 16 and not his Favoured number eight.

Award

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occasionally still works for his former Ferrari team.

Schumacher beat 17 other candidates for the prize, including Iraq's national football team, which won the Asian Cup for the first time in history earlier this year, and a joint candidacy by tennis aces Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

Former winners of the award include seven-times Tour de France cycling champion Lance Armstrong of the United States and Moroccan middle distance runner Hicham El Guerrouj who holds the world record for the 1,500-metre race.

It was awarded last year to Spain's national basketball team.

Spain's Crown Prince Felipe is the patron of the Asturias foundation which annually hands out eight awards -- each worth 50,000 euros (68,000 US dollars) -- in fields ranging from sports to science and literature.

T20 'perfect' for Gayle

AFP, Johannesburg



West Indian opener Chris Gayle, one of the great disappointments of the World Cup in the Caribbean, knows he has the perfect chance to silence his critics at the inaugural Twenty20 championships.

The famously laid-back Gayle came second in a "Top of the Flops" poll when the West Indies played host to the premier ODI event in March and April, but the shortest form of the game appears tailor-made to his bludgeoning style.

"Yes, it's perfectly suited to me. I am sure everyone will enjoy it," Gayle told reporters in Johannesburg.

The pressure of being hosts was one of the reasons attributed for the West Indies poor showing on home soil in the ODI World Cup but Gayle

said new skipper Ramnaresh Sarwan's team was free of expectations this time round.

"The feeling is good. All the guys are feeling well," he said. "To be honest there's no pressure at all (from back home). There haven't been a lot of people saying much about it."

Even the retirement of the legendary Brian Lara did not faze Gayle, who said: "Life always goes on."

Despite his reputation as something of a rebel, Gayle was handed the captaincy for the recent one-day series against England which resulted in victory for the Windies.

He also captained the team for a couple of Twenty20 internationals against England, winning one and losing the second.

"The experience was good", said Gayle who top-scored in the second international with 61 off only 37 balls.

His fellow opener Shivnarine Chanderpaul, in outstanding form during the English summer, said the team were not just here to make up the numbers.

"It's a different game, it's a faster pace, you have to find a way to score out there," said Chanderpaul whose attacking approach to one-day cricket is in stark contrast to his crab-like reputation in Test matches.

Chanderpaul was also confident that the team would not feel the loss of Lara unduly and predicted they would restore their credibility.

"We will get back on top," said the 33-year-old Guyanese.

After opening the tournament with a match against South Africa at the Wanderers ground in Johannesburg on September 11, the West Indies are due to take on their other first round rivals Bangladesh on September 13.

Pollock admits depression

AFP, Johannesburg



Shaun Pollock, one of the most miserly pacemen in world cricket, reckons the upcoming Twenty20 world championships will leave many of his fellow bowlers in a state of depression.

The veteran South African, currently ranked the world's top one-day bowler, knows most batsmen will approach the 20-over format with all guns blazing and rewrite the economy rate conventions.

For Pollock, who finally hit his maiden one-day century in June more than 11 years after his debut, the only chance of redemption will be if he gets a chance to open his shoulders himself once the tournament begins next Tuesday.

"I think if you are only a bowler in this form of the game it would be pretty depressing," said

Pollock.

The 34-year-old former skipper, who has an impressive economy rate of only 3.7 runs an over in ODIs, said that he would have to adopt a "different mindset" during the crash, bang, wallop of Twenty20.

His biggest battle would be to settle into a rhythm quickly, well aware that he will not have the usual luxury of a few overs to settle in, Pollock told reporters in Johannesburg.

"There is obviously a little more pressure, but you just have to go out there and express yourself," he said. "I normally take four overs and by then it is done and dusted."

"I wouldn't have a clue what a good economy rate is in T20," he added.

The Proteas will get the inaugural Twenty20 championships under way on September 11 when they line up against the West Indies at the Wanderers stadium in Johannesburg.

Pollock is the veteran of the squad which is minus star batsman Jacques Kallis, whose dropping has been the main topic of conversation among South African cricket followers.

His long-time teammate Pollock said the exclusion would have been a big surprise and a disappointment for Kallis who is considering his position as the Test team's vice captain after being dropped.

"He would have been very surprised not being able to play in front of his home crowd. He would have been very disappointed," he said.

If the Twenty20 was seen as anathema to Kallis's game, it should suit big-hitting batsman Justin Kemp down to the ground.

"With T20 it is in and out and over and done with," said Kemp who has a strike rate of nearly 90 runs per 100 balls in ODIs.

"It's basically a helter-skelter from ball one", said the right-handed batsman.

Freddie comes first?

INTERNET, undated



Now we know that the emperor's new boots are not quite what we thought they were, and that Andrew Flintoff is injured again, it is time we get real about the England all-rounder -- and every other crooked superstar for that matter.

On Tuesday a newspaper carried rugby World Cup supplement with a picture of Jonny Wilkinson on the cover and the headline "Encore Jonny!" Yeah, right. At the weekend there were pictures of Michael Owen scoring for Newcastle. England's football manager, Steve McClaren, will hope that Owen might reproduce the same form for the national side over the next 10 days.

Disappointment is bad enough. But hope, especially when confused with expectation, is the real killer. Someone once described hope as the feeling you have that the feeling you have isn't permanent. It seems particularly applicable to sport at the moment. While the peak deeds of Wilkinson and Owen feel so distant there is a dull ache of realisation that they may never achieve such things again, the same pragmatism does not apply to the nation's champion all-rounder.

Perhaps it's because Flintoff's greatest moment, as the pivotal figure in England's Ashes triumph in 2005, is fresher in the mind. Or it could be that the man is bigger --

in more ways than one -- than other heroes. He is not merely a great sportsman but a life force, whose spirit, strength and generosity -- the picture of him commiserating with Brett Lee two summers ago is one of sport's enduring images -- has even influenced people who find cricket as baffling as would an American reading that famous tea towel.

I heard my favourite Freddie story on that glorious Oval afternoon minutes after the Ashes had been won. "Super Freddie," chanted the crowd as they waved and swayed under fluttering flags of St George.

High up in a private box a fellow guest turned to me and said: "I must tell you what Freddie is really like. He's just a fantastic human being. He came round to my house a few weeks ago. My 14-year-old daughter was thrilled -- so thrilled, in fact, that she told some friends at school. The word spread. The only problem was that some pupils didn't believe her and even teased her about it. I told Freddie and asked if he would sign a shirt or a match programme so she could show it at school."

"He shook his head. 'No way,' he said. 'I can do better than that. I'll go down to her school and pick her up.' And he did. I just thought I'd tell you because some people think he's just a great cricketer but he's an incredible bloke as well."

Everyone who knows Flintoff has a favourite story. He is adored as a national treasure, which is

why he survived "Fredalo" and other infamous drinking escapades. Being a terrific cricketer who bowls faster and hits the ball further than Ian Botham also helps. But because he appeals to us on an emotional level he also messes with our thinking. Because he's as strong as a young bull we forget that he's also as fragile as a porcelain figurine. He even dupes himself when he describes himself as a batting all-rounder. But sadly it is time to get real about Freddie. And the reality is that we can no longer put all our eggs in his basket. His batting form has collapsed, which means he is not good enough to bat at six in either the Test or one-day side. Yet to play him at seven or eight as one of a four-man attack would put even more pressure on that infamous left ankle.

The selectors, who once wondered how they would manage without him, are now asking how he can best be accommodated. He must play, whenever he can. But we must look upon him, when fit, as a bonus rather than the heartbeat of a campaign, as he was two years ago. But what a bonus.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT SOME FOLKS MIGHT CONSIDER A REGULAR BAR OF SOAP A BATHDAY CAKE? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals H