



PHOTO: BFF ONLINE

Bangladesh national footballers practise on the Circuit House hilltop at Cox's Bazar yesterday as part of their special training programme.

Trans-Tasman T20 soon

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand teams could compete in Australia's domestic Twenty20 competition as soon as 2008-09. The boards of Australia and New Zealand are discussing the potential for a Trans-Tasman tournament, with the top sides going on to compete against teams from India, England and South Africa in the newly-announced Champions Twenty20 League.

Glenn McGrath and Stephen Fleming were in New Delhi on Thursday for the launch of the ICC-sanctioned competition, which is seen as an official alternative to the Indian Cricket League (ICL). Although no players were named as definite participants Fleming and McGrath, both of whom had been courted by the ICL, would appear likely to play. Shane Warne's decision not to sign with the ICL has also fuelled speculation he might join the Champions Twenty20 League, which will start in October 2008.

The details are still being fine-tuned but the initial plan is for domestic teams that progress to the international tournament to be allowed to top up their squads with guest players. That could mean Warne or McGrath might sign with an Indian or England domestic team, for example, while an Australian state side could try to lure top players from other countries.

"That is certainly a possibility in the Champions League and, in some respects, that is part of the attraction," Cricket Australia's CEO James Sutherland told the Age. "It's a concept where we have the best of the best at domestic level playing against each other. Previously, apart from really isolated instances, this just hasn't happened before."

In the first season, the two Australian states that reach the KFC Twenty20 final will earn a place in the Champions League. However, after 2007-08 the states will probably have extra competition for a spot in the worldwide tournament.

"We have had preliminary talks with Cricket Australia about establishing a trans-Tasman league which will feed into subsequent global championships," New Zealand Cricket's CEO Justin Vaughan said. "Both New Zealand Cricket and Cricket Australia are interested in exploring this potential further with the possibility of a trans-Tasman league starting as early as the 2008-09 cricket season. The two top teams from this league would then progress to the Champions Twenty20 tournament to play teams from Indian, African and European leagues."

A bigger defeat

INTERNET, undated

Australia's shock Twenty20 loss to Zimbabwe cost cricket punters around the world tens of millions of dollars.

Betfair, one of the world's largest cricket betting outlets, revealed it traded a thumping \$24 million in matched bets on Australia to win.

"It was a phenomenal night of betting. Almost all of the betting centred around Australia at ludicrously short prices," Betfair's Hugh Taggart said.

"We matched \$27,679,906 on the match, amazing figures for an opening round Twenty20 game like that, and \$24 million of it was traded on Australia."

Not even skinny odds stopped the punters.

"When the Aussies got into \$1.01 we still matched more than \$400,000. That's the shortest odds possible," Taggart said.

"What's even more staggering is that a further \$2.8 million was matched at \$1.02."

"It's safe to assume there's more interest in Twenty20 than we first thought."

TAB Sportsbet's Glenn Munsie said Australia's defeat was a monstrous upset.

"They were considered such good things we didn't even put up a head-to-head market on it," Munsie said.

Taggart said there were some daring punters who cashed in on Zimbabwe.

"They did get out to as much as \$80 to win," he said.

"More than \$1000 was matched on Zimbabwe between \$60 and \$65 and another \$5000 between \$45 and \$55."

Australia's defeat saw its odds to win the title ease from \$2.72 to \$3.80 with Betfair.

McLaren fined, docked points

AFP, Paris



McLaren boss Ron Dennis has refused to accept the FIA's decision to strip his team of their 2007 constructors' championship points for their involvement in the Formula One spy saga.

Formula One's governing body has also fined the British team 100 million dollars for incorporating illegally obtained Ferrari intellectual property on their MP4-22 car.

The material concerned is a 780-page dossier given to then-McLaren chief designer Mike Coughlan by ex-Ferrari engineer Nigel Stepney in April.

Dennis has protested McLaren's innocence since the story broke in early July and continued to do so after Thursday's decision.

"The most important thing is that

we will be going motor racing this weekend, the rest of the season and every season. This means that our drivers can continue to compete for the world championship.

"However having been at the hearing today I do not accept that we deserved to be penalised in this way," he said.

"Today's evidence given to the FIA by our drivers, engineers and staff clearly demonstrated that we did not use any leaked information to gain a competitive advantage.

"We have never denied that the information from Ferrari was in the personal possession of one of our employees at his home. The issue is: was this information used by McLaren?"

"This is not the case and has not been proven today."

McLaren's drivers Lewis Hamilton, the British rookie who is leading the drivers' championship, and defending double world cham-

pion Fernando Alonso escaped FIA sanctions in return for fully complying with the investigation.

Dennis's team had led the constructors' championship by 23 points but not only have they been excluded from this year's title race, there is also the possibility of further penalties, concerning the 2008 season, to follow in December when the FIA examine the McLaren car for next season.

Dennis though is bullish that there will be no further problems and insists that his team will emerge victorious from this year's drivers' championship.

"There will be no issue for the 2008 season as we have not at any stage used any intellectual property of any other team," he added.

"We have got the best drivers and the best car and we intend to win the world championship."

McLaren have not yet decided if they will appeal Thursday's decision.

Rooney battles for place



AFP, London

Emile Heskey believes his telepathic partnership with Michael Owen can help the Newcastle striker break Sir Bobby Charlton's England goal-scoring record.

Heskey has established a rapport with Owen that brings the best out of England's premier forward and they combined to terrorise Israel and Russia in their country's Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Owen has struggled to find his best form for England when he has played alongside Peter Crouch, Alan Smith and Wayne Rooney. But, reunited with Heskey in the past week, he has been a player transformed.

Three goals in two matches got England's stuttering bid to reach Euro 2008 firmly back on track and moved Owen to within nine goals of Charlton's all-time record of 49.

Heskey and Owen's relationship goes back over a decade to their time together in England's Under-18 team, when the youngsters first started to dovetail their contrasting talents.

The Wigan star's muscular presence has been the perfect foil to Owen's rapier finishing ever since. They linked up to good effect at Liverpool and, when England manager Steve McClaren was short of forwards for the last two matches, Owen was quick to speak up on Heskey's behalf.

"I've played with Michael since

we were in the Under-18s together. We know each other's style very well and we benefit from it," Heskey said.

"It's almost telepathic between the two of us. We've been there a long time."

"With Michael, he only needs half a chance to score a goal. He's definitely going to test the keeper. That's why he's chasing records."

"He's been doing it from a very young age and he's never going to change."

A gap of three years since they last played together was no hindrance and Heskey performed well enough to raise doubts over Rooney's chances of regaining his place when the Manchester United star returns from injury.

Heskey never doubted his ability to make a positive impact for England if he got another chance.

"I knew I could slot back into the side," he said. "I never thought the chance had gone. I always had confidence in my own ability."

"I just had to wait for the manager when he needed me. He showed by recalling David Beckham and Sol Campbell that there are chances there, so you can never give up."

Such was the force of Heskey's impact that McClaren now faces an previously unthinkable dilemma. Could he leave out Rooney for Heskey?

If he does opt to keep faith with the muscular Wigan striker, few would complain.

Certainly not John Terry, who appreciated how well the front two

combined as Heskey's physical presence helped Owen score three times in the two qualifiers.

"Emile's been different class," the England captain said. "You find yourself on the pitch when he holds the ball up saying 'fantastic Emile, fantastic'."

"All through the game and in the last game as well, he was different class, and the partnership he struck up with Michael has been fantastic."

"Michael's always showed he has that cutting edge. Whenever you get chances you can't wish them to fall to anyone else than Michael Owen. He's such a great finisher and works so hard."

Heskey, Gareth Barry, Micah Richards and Shaun Wright-Phillips all played key roles against Israel and Russia, leaving the likes of Rooney and Beckham sweating on their places.

"No one's guaranteed a place now," Terry said. "Everybody feels it. I really feel I've got to go back to Chelsea now and perform at my highest because there's players like Wes Brown, Joleon Lescott and Michael Dawson in the squad."

"We've got to maintain our level of performance week in, week out, when we're away with England, training every day and in the games."

"Everybody coming into the squad really wanted to fight for their place."

"Players who aren't on the bench are determined to work harder on the next trip and make the starting line-up."

Raju slams hattrick

SPORTS REPORTER

Raju Ahmed struck a hatrick as Shantinagar trounced Mirpur Chalanika 4-1 in the Third Divison Football League at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

Raju scored early on, hitting the net in the third minute and then adding one more, eight minutes later. He added one more in the 57th minute. Ariful Hasan netted the other in the 45th minute.

Jahangir scored a consolation goal for Mirpur in the 70th minute.

In another match at the same venue, Rahmatganj played out a goalless draw with Rainbow.

At the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium, Mirpur Eleven beat Tongi by a solitary goal scored by Jafar in the 33rd minute.

The match between Jurain Janata and Jirabo ended at 1-1.

Sarwan laments inconsistency

CRICINFO, undated

West Indies captain Ramnaresh Sarwan called on his team to be more consistent after they crashed out of the ICC World Twenty20 in the first round.

"One of the things I've stressed on since I became captain is consistency and that is something we need to focus on," Sarwan said. "It is a matter of us going back and working hard. I know we've been saying this for the longest while about our fielding and bowling and sometimes our batting."

Sarwan was critical of his team's fielding and bowling in the tournament. "I don't think we executed our plans very well, we didn't bowl well and you saw how we fielded," he said. "We bowled wides today (Thursday) again and dropped a vital catch. Nevertheless it's important that we work on our game because we have a tour coming up to South Africa."

Sarwan said his side lost against Bangladesh because of a poor start and that the toss wasn't a crucial factor in the match. "I don't want to blame anything on the toss. I think we should have played better in the first six overs (of our innings) although Chris (Gayle) got out."

"We didn't set a momentum there in the first six overs and that set us back and I thought they (Bangladesh) bowled really well. They utilised the surface really well. When I went in the ball was still gripping from the left arm spinner but apart from that the opening batsmen said there wasn't much movement."

Sarwan had words of praise for Dwayne Smith and Marlon Samuels, whose cameos lent respectability to the West Indian score. "Both Dwayne and Marlon played well in the end but it was asking a bit too much of them at the end. We lost out on a few runs at the start of the innings and in the middle overs as well."

West Indies' next international assignment is a full tour of South Africa which starts in December.

Decision shocks

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Tendulkar, he was the vice captain in the Test series in England." Former captain MAK Pataudi, however, believes the Board should not pressurise Dravid to revert his decision.

"If someone doesn't want to continue, he should be allowed to do that. India has done exceptionally well this year in England under his leadership. But if he does not want to continue as captain and wants to be there only as a player, we should respect that," he said.

Indians take

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Khurram Faizan of Pakistan by the same margin while Rakshay outplayed Aashman Goghari 6-1, 7-5 and Ronit outclassed Japan's Tachi Ryotoku 6-3, 6-4.

In the girls' singles, Parthana Thombare and Riddhi Hegde will play out the final of the girls' singles.

Prarthana defeated Malik Arzoo 6-1, 1-0 after Arzoo retired while Riddhi outplayed VKC Vishesh 7-5, 6-4.

Yusuf inspires

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In the U-13 league, Robin struck twice in Motijheel Government HS's 2-0 defeat of Jatrabari Ideal School, Kamalapur School came from a goal down to edge Model High School of Khilgaon 2-1 with Faisal and Ariful scoring for the winners in the second half while Segun Bagicha HS drew 1-1 with Shaheed Nabi HS.

Game before

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knocked out in the first round after a shock defeat against Bangladesh in the opening match.

He opted out of the ongoing Twenty20 World Championships in South Africa and was replaced with wicketkeeper-batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

A viable new layer



CRICINFO, undated

Only three days ago cricket's new age was heralded with the beginning of the World Twenty20. Perhaps it is a sign of the times that a newer age beckons already. The Champions Twenty20 League, announced with pomp and grandeur on Thursday, promises to transform cricket worldwide. Judgment must be suspended on whether it will be for the better or worse, but it can be said that it will be cricket like we have never known it.

For a start, it will be more like football. Already the length of the game has shrunk to roughly twice that of a football match, and now with a league like those in football, the fabric of the game is about to change. For a sport that has been founded on bilateralism or regionalism, this is a paradigm shift. And unlike the Indian Cricket League, which is based on a similar principle, but is bereft of players, infrastructure, and official sanction to be able to make it count, this is serious business. Serious enough for the ICC president to fly across to India for the launch, abandoning his own party back in South Africa.

The league is the combination of two radical ideas. Clearly, those who run cricket see in Twenty20 a golden future. Cold to the concept, to begin with, the Indian board has now gone to the other extreme and chosen the format as the agent to revolutionise the game. Last season Twenty20 was a footnote in the Indian domestic calendar, next year it promises to be the main event.

Far more significant is the concept of franchises, which could potentially alter the dynamics of the game.

In no other team sport in the world has there existed such a disparity between the highest levels and all forms below. It has been cricket's greatest weakness that no layer below international cricket has been financially viable. Domestic cricket has merely served the purpose of being the supply line to the national level, and has subsisted on the charity of national boards. The Australian domestic competition, despite being the strongest domestic competition in the world, gets negligible crowd support; in India the first-class game has suffered from criminal neglect on the part of the administrators. That the proposed league could help create a vibrant and viable second tier is a welcome prospect.

Of course a lot will depend on how the cricket boards and the ICC adjust

their calendar to accommodate the league. It is obvious that its success will depend heavily on the participation of international players, and the international calendar is already creaking. England's players haven't had a decent break in two years, and the Indians managed one only because they were dumped out of the World Cup. Money is a fair motivation for professional players, but these matches must necessarily be staged at the expense of some of the many desultory ODIs that are routinely squeezed into the Future Tours Programme, finalised by the ICC. Player burnout is a factor, but even spectators need a break.

This will be the first instance of administrators giving up control of the selection process; those who buy the franchises for the league will have the freedom to bid for players from an open pool. This will be a novelty. The players who were paraded at the event on Thursday were a curious bunch. Of them, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly have opted out of Twenty20, Glenn McGrath has retired from all forms of the game, Anil Kumble has retired from one-day cricket, and Stephen Fleming wasn't deemed good enough to play the World Twenty20 for his team. Yet it was implied by the organisers that were all available to the new league. Obviously star value will count as much as playing merit.

Cricketers will now come with individual price tags. How much will Tendulkar be worth? He has been the world's richest cricketer for years; will he also be the most expensive? Will money be a big enough catalyst to bind players who have, for most of their careers, been united by national or state affiliations? The failure of the ICC's ambitious Super Series proved that you can't make a great team by merely assembling a few great players. Or will professional obligations be compelling enough in this instance?

Will it see the advent of football-style managers who will decide on the buying and selling of players and the picking of teams? Will the role of the captain diminish?

Of the four cricket boards that have agreed to participate in the league, only the BCCI has announced its next move. England, Australia and South Africa already have their own domestic Twenty20 competitions. Australia and South Africa have sponsors for each of their teams, but these sponsors don't own the teams. The first Champions League, to be played next October, is expected to be a hybrid, but will these boards be disbanding their existing competitions and handing the teams

over to franchises? The idea is financially appealing, but it will entail giving up control.

The concept of Twenty20 is built around the idea of packaged entertainment, and in India the fallout could be radical for the spectators, for whom the experience of watching cricket at grounds is currently somewhere between an ordeal and a nightmare. Since gate collections will form a major source of revenue for the franchisees, they will get a percentage of the central revenue -- which will mainly comprise earnings from the sale of media rights -- and will fully pocket the local revenues which include proceeds from gate collections, hospitality, and in-stadia promotions. It is reasonable to assume then that the paying public will have to be accorded the dignity normally given to a customer. This, in itself, would be a quantum leap for the game in India.

But what will happen to the game that we have known and cherished? Already Twenty20 feels like a different game, lacking in character, subtlety, variety and the skills that endear cricket to us. So far it has been at the fringes; what will happen when it becomes the centre piece?

Change is inevitable, and often welcome. In case of proposed league, the gains are tangible enough, but it will perhaps take us a couple of years to find out the cost. Meanwhile, get ready for the ride.

'PCB part of our gang'

PTI, New Delhi

BCCI on Friday allayed apprehensions regarding Pakistan's participation in the Twenty20 Champions League scheduled to take place next year in October.

"The Pakistan Cricket Board is very much a part of the five initial governing cricket boards that have come together to launch the Champions Twenty20 league," BCCI vice president Lalit Modi said in a press release.

The other being the England and Wales Cricket Board, Cricket Australia, Cricket South Africa and the BCCI.

"PCB will undoubtedly be part of the inaugural Champions League, especially since Pakistan has been playing an official twenty20 league for the last three years and it has been highly successful," Modi also said. PCB is also one of the four contenders that could host the inaugural edition of the League.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan superstar Sanath Jayasuriya pulls a boundary during his thunderous 88 against Kenya in the ICC Twenty20 World Championships at the Wanderers in Johannesburg yesterday.

Lankan lesson for Kenya

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total on the board. The others chipped in as well.

"It's nice to get two records in our first match of the world championships. It will give us the confidence for our remaining matches."

Kenyan captain Steve Tikolo conceded Sri Lanka had "taught his team a lesson" on how to play the shortest version of the game. "We did not bat or bowl well, perhaps we were not allowed to by the opposition," he said. "They were just too good for us."

Jayasuriya put on 75 off 39 balls for the second wicket with Kumar Sangakkara (30) and an incredible 87 in 30 balls for the third with Jayawardene.

The Sri Lankan captain, who reached 50 off just 22 balls, helped himself to nine fours and two sixes.

Mubarak, who came to bat in the 19th over at 215-6, pounded Ngoche for 6.6,6.4,6 with the first five balls he faced before ending the over with a single.

In the final over bowled by Peter Ongondo, Mubarak hit the first two balls for boundaries and the third for a six.

his only over.

The Sri Lankan bowlers proved too strong for the Kenyans with Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga and Tillekeratne Dilshan claiming two wickets each.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Twenty20 World Championships match between Kenya and New Zealand at the Wanderers on Friday:

SRI LANKA
Jayasuriya c sub (Suji) b N Ngoche 88
Tharanga b Odoyo 10
Sangakkara b Kamande 30
Jayawardene lbw b Kamande 65
Silva run out 5
Dilshan b Kamande 3
Mubarak not out 46
Wijekoon not out 1
Extras: (lb-2, w-8, nb-2) 12
Total: (For six wkts in 20 overs)260
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-94, 3-181, 4-195, 5-212, 6-215.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Odoyo	3	0	14	1
Ongondo	4	0	53	0
N Ngoche	4	0	57	1
L Ngoche	4	0	61	0
Kamande	4	0	48	3
Tikolo	1	0	25	0

D Obuya run out	18
N Ngoche b Vaas	5
Mishra st Sangakkara b Jayasuriya	16
Tikolo c Jayawardene b Malinga	4
C Obuya c and b Malinga	2
Obanda st Sangakkara b Dilshan	21
Kamande lbw b Wijekoon	5
L Ngoche not out	4
Ongondo c Jayawardene b Dilshan	3
Odoyo absent hurt-Extras: (w-10)	10
Total: (All out in 19.3 overs)	88
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-20, 3-42, 4-47, 5-50, 6-66, 7-81, 8-83, 9-88.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	4	1	15	2
Fernando	3	0	23	0
Jayasuriya	3	0	9	1
Malinga	3	0	13	2
Silva	2	0	12	0
Wijekoon	3	0	12	1
Dilshan	1.3	0	4	2

Result: Sri Lanka won by 172 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Sanath Jayasuriya.
Toss: Kenya
Umpires: Nigel Llong (ENG) and Daryl Harper (AUS)
TV umpire: Mark Benson (ENG)
Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG)