

Yousuf to face arbitration hearing

CRICINFO, undated

Mohammad Yousuf, the Pakistan batsman who recently pulled out of the Indian Cricket League (ICL), is set to face an arbitration hearing in Mumbai on December 15. Yousuf had signed with the ICL in the wake of his omission from Pakistan's squad for the ICC World Twenty20 before cancelling his contract after talks with the Pakistan board.

Yousuf then signed a national contract as well as signing up to play in the India Premier League (IPL), a recognised league that is run by four different national boards and is approved by the ICC.

The organisers of the ICL insist he can't join the rival league (IPL). "It's an open and shut case as far as we're concerned," said Ashish Kaul, the executive vice-president of the Essel Group who are organising the tournament, told Cricinfo. "The contract clearly says he can't play in any other professional league."

Meanwhile the Pakistan board, who convinced Yousuf to cancel his contract, have assured their full support. "We will fully defend Yousuf, if he is taken to court using all legal means," said Nasim Ashraf, the chairman of the PCB.

Besides Yousuf, all of the ICL's other Pakistani recruits have decided to honour their commitments with the league. The most prominent among them is the now retired Inzamam-ul-Haq, who despite having signed on with the ICL, was given an opportunity to make his exit from international cricket in the second Test against South Africa. The others in the ICL mix are Abdur Razaq, Azhar Mahmood, Taufeeq Umar, Imran Farhat, and Shabbir Ahmed.

Portuguese help for India

AFP, New Delhi

Football in India has been given a boost after the Portuguese Football League (LPA) signed a deal with Indian football bosses on Friday to help develop the country's youngsters.

The move will also see a Portuguese club visit the country further down the line, LPA vice-president Ricardo Castanheira said.

"Both the countries share political and historical relations and we want to take it forward. We will make all kinds of efforts to develop skills in youngsters," he told reporters.

"A Portuguese club coming to India will be in the second part," said Castanheira, who is part of a Portuguese delegation in Delhi for the European-India summit.

Castanheira, who signed the deal with All India Football Federation (AIFF) secretary Alberto Colaco, said the football culture of Portugal could inspire India.

"The running of academies is a very good practice in Portugal. Somebody like (Manchester United forward) Cristiano Ronaldo has come up because of that," he added. "They provide very good facilities for training and practice; this can serve as a benchmark for India."

Cricket-mad India is ranked 145th in international football, with none of its players enjoying iconic status.

National captain Bhaichung Bhutia is slightly popular, having played in the past for Bury Football Club in England's League Two.

The AIFF has a similar tie-up to promote soccer with Deutsche Fußball Liga, which runs the Bundesliga in Germany.

Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon also promised to help develop Indian football on a visit to the country this month as part of an Olympic delegation.

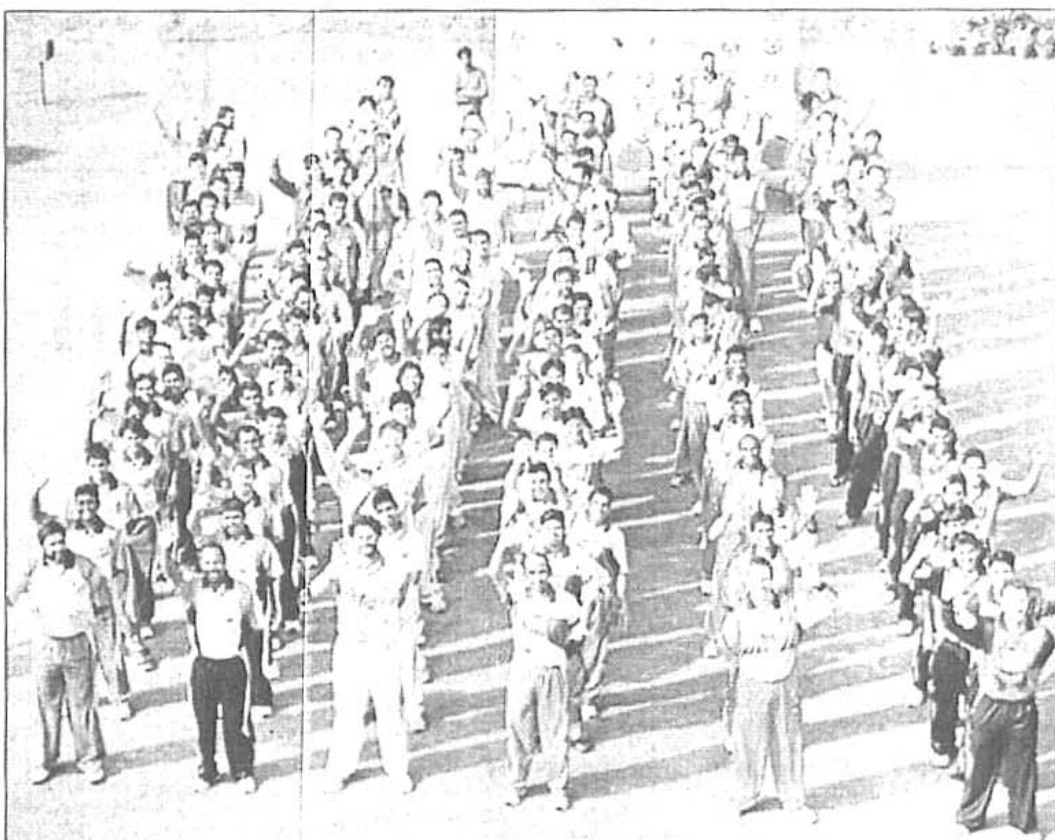
Second win

FROM PAGE 17

reached 19 for two in 3.4 overs.

BRIEF SCORES

KHULNA: 253 and 327-5 in 76.1 overs (Imrul 48, Sadat 6, Mustafizur 42, Shakib 103*, Tushar 92, Mashrafe 3, Nahidul 13*, Mahbub 1-42, Ashraful 1-64, Mosharraf 1-97, Riyad 2-32).
DHAKA: 204 and 275-4 in 78 overs (Anwar 40, Mehrez 75, Ashraf 75, Mahmudullah 27, Shamsur 51*, Nadi 4*, Shakib 1-53, Murad 1-85).
BARISAL: 293 and 192 in 83.5 overs (Iftannan 0, Shahriar 9, Imran 0, Rokibul 43, Raisul 21, Humayun 26, Shaheen 0, Arfat 31, Sajid 37, Tareq 3-58, Kamrul 3-39, Dhiman 2-7).
CHITTAGONG: 352-9 dec and 137-3 in 28 overs (Salahuddin 60, Nafees 25, Nazimuddin 4, Dhiman 33*, Aftab 2*, Arfat 2-21).
RAISHAH: 417 and 228 all out in 93 overs (Saqlain 6, Zunaed 12, Farhad 13, Naeem 50, Mushtaq 6, Jahurul 0, Mashud 30, Anisur 47, Farhad 36, Shahjada 5, Alamgir 0, Kapali 5-77, Enamul 3-57, Sadiqur 2-21).
SYLHET: 293 all out and 19-2 in 3.4 overs (Nazmul 8, Sadiqur 2*, Rashid 8; Farhad 2-5).



The six teams of Indian Cricket League (ICL) line up during an official photo session in Panchkula on Friday.

No hiding from hype

CRICINFO, undated

Until Friday, Muttiah Muralidaran was a peripheral presence on England's tour of Sri Lanka. He popped up briefly at the Nondescripts ground on Sunday to grab a sneak preview of his opponents, but by and large he's been keeping a low profile, recovering from a tough tour to Australia and leaving others to speculate about the unique challenge that he poses. But there's no hiding from the hype any longer.

Murali is back in his home town of Kandy, and on Saturday, when the first Test gets underway at the Asgiriya Stadium, he faces the tantalising prospect of reclaiming his world Test bowling crown in front of his most ardent adores. Back in January, his great spin rival, Shane Warne, retired from the game with a benchmark tally of 708 wickets, but now Murali needs just five more scalps to reclaim the record that he himself took from Courtney Walsh (519) at Harare in May 2004.

"It would be a special moment to do it in my home place because I grew up and played my cricket here in my younger days," said Murali, as he faced a scrum of media ahead of Sri Lanka's training session. "But it all depends on how I bowl and how they bat." On past form Murali would beat against him, but Murali was a shadow of his former self in Australia recently, where he managed a mere four wickets at 100 apiece in the entire two-Test series.

That familiar grin was back on his face on Friday, however, as he shrugged off the disappointments Down Under and focussed on his next challenge. "Australia played well and for most of the time there was pressure on the bowlers and

500 runs (on the board), said Murali. "They are a great batting line-up and the wickets didn't spin much. This time we are at home, so that gives us a little edge."

Though he refused to be drawn on the man he would most like to take with him into the record books, there's no question that the wicket of Kevin Pietersen would be a particularly coveted prize. Murali secured the last laugh during the 2006 series in England by bowling Sri Lanka to a share of the series at Trent Bridge, but up until then, Pietersen's strokeplay had bordered on the dismissive, particularly at Edgbaston where he produced an outrageous reverse-sweep for six.

"He's one of the great batsmen but one mistake and you can get out," said Murali. "That's one of the things about Test cricket, you can't just reverse-sweep every time. But if he wants to, he's taking his risk."

Eighteen months on, Pietersen is perhaps a shade more deferential in his assessment of Murali's talents, but as ever remains geared towards aggression. "I will play pretty similar to the way I played him in the UK, I will just have to be a lot more patient," said Pietersen. "These are his conditions and it is definitely going to spin a lot more. I have thought about how to counter it and if it works it works, if it doesn't work it doesn't work."

Pietersen is well placed to pass judgment on the current world-record holder and his soon-to-be successor, having crossed swords with Warne during his farewell series in Australia last winter. "They are both assassins. Both champions. Both geniuses," said Pietersen. "It is just a pleasure to face them and hopefully try to get the better of them."

"I know the way Shane tries to get you out and the way Muralidaran tries to get you out. The difference is

Muralidaran spins the ball both ways and is harder to pick. If you look at Muralidaran's delivery stride, his feet don't change whereas other bowlers' do. The only change is his wrist and it is hard to pick that up."

"I am going out there as confident in my preparation as I can be, as I always am," said Pietersen. "The more you face Muralidaran the more you start to pick him. Last year I only picked him 70-80% of the time, but the more you play him the easier it becomes, as with any bowler. It is just a case of trying to spend some time in the middle and get through your first 20 balls."

However, it'll take more than just 20 balls of resistance to deny Murali his most coveted milestone. At the age of 35, there cannot be many years left in one of cricket's most incredible players, but for the moment the enjoyment of the game remains strong, and he's determined to push on for as long as possible -- maybe even as far as 1000 wickets.

"It depends on my body and if my performance is as good as in the past," said Murali. "You can't just target wickets because you have to bowl well, and wait for batsmen to make mistakes. To get to 1000 I'd have to play for another four or five years, so realistically it's not possible, but if something goes well, like when I got 96 wickets last year, it could happen. You never know."

Such achievements never even crossed Murali's mind when he started playing the game as a schoolboy in Kandy. "I made it to a school team, then kept on going up to the national team, where I thought if I played one Test I'll be happy. But I wanted to keep on going a little more, and I kept on playing and the wickets came. I love the game so much I keep on playing. It's the No. 1 game in Sri Lanka, and until they find someone good I'll just keep on being that person."

Lions win opener

BBC ONLINE, undated

Chandigarh Lions, led by former New Zealand star Chris Cairns, emerged victorious in the first match of the Indian Cricket League at Panchkula yesterday.

With South African Andrew Hall hitting 31 not out and Kiwi Daryl Tuffey taking 3-15 they beat Delhi Jets, led by Sri Lanka's Marvan Atapattu, by nine runs.

A glitzy ceremony marked the launch in the northern town of Panchkula, with a \$3.85m for the winner.

The six-team, 17-day series includes stars Brian Lara and Inzamam-ul-Haq.

Former West Indies captain Lara is leading Mumbai Champs, while Inzamam is the captain of Hyderabad Heroes, with the two sides meeting on Saturday.

The other teams have been named Kolkata Tigers and Chennai Superstars, although all games take place at the same venue, near Chandigarh.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has refused to acknowledge the ICL and has threatened players with lengthy bans.

An officially sanctioned rival, the Indian Premier League, begins play in April with star names including Australia's Ricky Ponting and Muttiah Muralidaran of Sri Lanka.

A new rule has been introduced in the ICL that prevents batsmen running for overthrows if a fielder's throw hits the stumps.

Vaas to retire in 2008

REUTERS, Kandy

Sri Lanka bowler Chaminda Vaas will retire in 2008.

Vaas, 33, has been recalled for the first Test against England starting on Saturday after being dropped earlier this month in Australia. It will be his 100th Test.

"I give myself one more year in Test cricket and in that time I hope to take 350 wickets before I quit," Vaas told reporters on Friday.

"I will not wait for people to start saying that I am too old to play and the left out of the side as I don't want to become a laughing stock," Vaas said.

"I am proud and honoured to have served my country for so long and I am eager to perform in my 100th Test. I want to make it a special one by bowling my country to victory," he said.

Vaas has taken 320 wickets at 29.44 during a 13-year Test career.

There has been speculation in Sri Lanka that Vaas has been told by the selectors that his place cannot be guaranteed after the first Test against England.

The left-arm quick bowler has not taken a five-wicket haul in Test cricket since July 2005.

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene praised Vaas's record.

"It's a great achievement for a sub-continent fast bowler," Jayawardene said. "He's been a great fighter."

France-Germany

FROM PAGE 17

for the draw and then assess it."

The top seeds, for once, do not contain the strongest teams because three of the four spaces are reserved for joint hosts Austria and Switzerland and reigning European champions Greece.

As a result, a place among the second seeds was more highly-prized but Holland found themselves in the top pot despite being defeated by Belarus in their last Euro 2008 qualifier.

Italy are among the second seeds - along with the Czech Republic, Croatia and Sweden - and Germany one of the third seeds alongside Romania, Portugal and Spain.

France's position among the bottom seeds - the other countries are Poland, Turkey and Russia - can be explained by their unimpressive qualifying campaigns for this tournament and the last World Cup.

They were beaten home and away by Scotland and drew with Ukraine. In qualifying for the World Cup, Domenech's side drew five of their 10 matches against the likes of Switzerland, Israel and the Republic of Ireland.

MSC held

FROM PAGE 17

for a goal, the draw against a big team satisfied the local fans.

Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik thought both sides played well and it was a good match.

"We are playing two exhibition matches outside Dhaka and they would be worthy warm-up for the charity series against Abahani in Dhaka," said Manik.

Mohammedan will play their second match in Tangail today against a local XI.

TEAMS

MOHAMMEDAN: Aminul, Kamal, Arif, Hassan Al Mamun, Biplab, Ripon (Manjiman), Sharif, Arman Aziz, Sabir (Mithu), Figo (Mithu) and Farhad.

SYLHET XI: Sohel, Murshed, Jewel Rana, Munna Sr, Zakaria (Selim), Nannu (Chanchal), Rahel, Jewel, Munna Jr, Bipul (Layek) and Alfaz.

Pitch stumps England

AFP, Kandy

The changed nature of the pitch from green to barren brown has forced England to delay naming their team for the first Test against Sri Lanka starting on Saturday.

A startled England captain Michael Vaughan would not commit to his side, saying he wanted to wait until the last moment to ensure the best combination took the field at the Asgiriya stadium.

"It's been a difficult decision," Vaughan said of the likely team after a long training session on Friday.

"We came to the ground on Thursday to see a wicket that was very green, and we have come to the ground today (Friday) and found it has changed a fair bit."

"We have had a couple of long meetings about the final eleven, which proves we have got players in the squad who are pushing for places. It's been a hard decision."

England must decide between Test rookie Ravi Bopara and Owais Shah for the number six spot left vacant by the injured Andrew Flintoff and if a second spinner is needed instead of three seamers.

Vaughan said he wanted bowlers who were capable of taking 20 wickets to win the match and did not rule out playing Graeme Swann even though the off-spinner did not feature in the first-class match in Colombo this week.

"I think you can make too much of the warm-ups," said Vaughan. "A lot of the guys have just been to Sri Lanka for the one-day series in October, and so we all feel mentally ready and in good touch."

"It's just a matter of trying to groove those skills and make sure our mentality is right for Test match cricket. We need to work on our plans and strategies against all their unorthodox players."

Vaughan said picking between Bopara, who has yet to play a Test despite holding a regular place in recent one-day teams, and Shah was a "real hard decision."

"Bopara and Shah are both very skilled players, and in these conditions they are very suited to this style of play," said Vaughan. "They both play spin very well. It's a real hard decision as to which gets the numbersix spot."

Vaughan hinted that strike bowler Steve Harmison, who suffered back spasms in the practice match, was unlikely to be risked in

the first Test.

"Steve is available and he bowled a lot at the nets," said Vaughan. "But it would be a slight risk as we saw him walk off after bowling 10 or 11 overs in the last game."

If Swann does not make a surprise entry, England will field a three-man seam attack of Matthew Hoggard, left-arm Ryan Sidebottom and James Anderson on the dry wicket expected to get slower.

The main threat to England will be off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, who needs just five wickets to surpass retired Australian spinner Shane Warne's world record tally of 708 Test wickets.

Muralidaran has grabbed 205 wickets in his past 25 home Tests, but Vaughan wanted to focus on the entire Sri Lankan team instead of one bowler.

"He does not totally dominate our thoughts as that would be disrespectful to the other players in their team," Vaughan said of the master spinner.

"But we would be silly not to put him at the forefront of our minds."

"Everyone will play him in their own individual fashion. Some will try to grind him out, others will try to attack him. That is all I ever say. As long as you have a plan, go and do it."

'No more tri-series'

AFP, Sydney

Leading Australian players want the annual home triangular cricket one-day series dumped from their playing schedule, reports said Friday.

Senior stars Matthew Hayden and Adam Gilchrist say their Australian teammates are tired of the 30-year-old format.

The three-way series each Australian summer, the brainchild of late media mogul Kerry Packer, includes at least four non-core contests between the visiting sides and possibly seven if Australia does not make the finals along with the issue of dead rubbers.

The foreign matches are often poorly attended and this season India and Sri Lanka are scheduled to play in the tri-series against the Australians.

Cricket Australia's (CA) board

directors are about to discuss the prospect of instigating the biggest shake-up in the home one-day international calendar since the summer of 1979-80, when the tri-series was first staged.

Reports said removing a few ODIs will allow some room for the more popular Twenty20 format.

"I think the system has got a little bit tired as far as the tri-series is involved," Hayden told The Australian newspaper.

"I feel towards the back end of the tri-series, if one side like Australia has dominated the competition, there does seem to be a lot of dead rubbers."

"I think, as a fan, you want to be seeing a highly competitive match with a lot of running on it."

Hayden is a fan of the five-match concept which would see Australia play a single tournament against each visiting nation.

"I believe you can get just as much out of that from having a five-match series," he said.

Zim clinch famous win

FROM PAGE 17

of it, offering the batsmen too much width and plenty of run-scoring opportunities. The batsmen emulated the bowlers - Chanderpaul played a lone hand, but even he showed a strange reluctance to step it up. The rest of the cast was mediocre. Marlon Samuels played 49 balls for 25, while Runko Morton played dot ball after dot ball even as the asking-rate mounted. It would have been even worse for them had Vusi Sibanda not dropped Chanderpaul on 67.

An asking rate of 5.50 meant West Indies needed a strong start, and a major contribution from Chris Gayle, but neither happened. In the third over Gayle tried to play to leg, was too early on the stroke, and spooned a simple catch back to Elton Chigumbura. The fight, it seemed, went out of the innings right there. Chanderpaul kept them in the game by rotating the strike and bludgeoning the rare meaty blow - eventually getting to his eighth ODI century - but never did it seem the innings would be a match-winning one.

While West Indies were utterly insipid in the middle overs of the run-chase, Zimbabwe tightened the screw superbly with two impeccable spells by Utseya and Price. Both bowled in tandem, completed their ten overs on the trot, and conceded a combined total of 86. Even as the overs slipped, West Indies - and especially Morton - batted on seemingly oblivious to

the target that had to be chased down. By the time the 118-run partnership was finally ended, the asking-rate had climbed to almost 16 per over, and any salvage operation was virtually impossible.

West Indies' effort with the bat had been equally uninspiring earlier in the day. Brendan Taylor started the onslaught for Zimbabwe with a 30-ball 27 and Matsikenyeri took charge at the death with a 40-ball blitz that fetched 55, as 81 runs came off the last nine overs.

The platform for that late charge was laid by a 90-run fourth-wicket partnership between Chibhabha and Hamilton Mazakadza. Taylor's early blows ensured Zimbabwe had early runs on the board but his run-out, and the cheap dismissals of Vusi Sibanda and Tatenda Taibu saw Zimbabwe slump to 78 for 3.

Chibhabha rescued the innings with some sensible batting, knocking the ball into the gaps and crashing fours through cover and point whenever offered the width. Mazakadza played an excellent supporting act till he played across the line off Gayle and was trapped in front. Chibhabha had fallen in Gayle's previous over but the presence of two new batsmen towards the end of the innings did little to halt the momentum, as Matsikenyeri and Chigumbura turned it on in style, clouting leg-side boundaries as West Indies lost the plot with the ball and in the

field. At the halfway stage, Utseya would have been satisfied with the morning's work. As it turned out, the afternoon got even better.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between Zimbabwe and the West Indies at Harare Sports Club on Friday:

ZIMBABWE				
Sibanda c Ramdin b Powell	14			
Taylor run out	27			
Chibhabha lbw b Gayle	73			
Taibu c Ramdin b Bravo	10			
Mazakadza lbw b Gayle	36			
Chigumbura c Ramdal b Bravo	38			
Matsikenyeri b Taylor	55			
Utseya not out	6			
Dabengwa b Taylor	0			
Brent not out	0			
Extras: (lb-6, w-9)	15			
Total: (For 8 wks 50 overs)	274			
Did not bat: Price.				
Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-57, 3-78, 4-168, 5-175, 6-264, 7-269, 8-270.				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Powell	9	0	49	1
Rampaul	7	1	23	0
Taylor	10	0	68	2
Bravo	8	1	39	2
Lewis	10	0	49	0
Gayle	6	0	35	2

WEST INDIES				
Gayle c b Chigumbura	2			
Smith c Taibu b Chigumbura	5			
Chanderpaul not out	127			
Samuels c Taibu b Mazakadza	25			
Morton b Chibhabha	54			
Lewis c Chigumbura b Brent	14			
Bravo b Chibhabha	0			
Ramdin run out	7			
Rampaul c Utseya b Chigumbura	0			
Taylor not out	1			
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, w-4)	8			
Total: (For 8 wks 50 overs)	243			
Did not bat: Powell.				

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-22, 3-77, 4-195, 5-210, 6-212, 7-240, 8-240.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Chigumbura	8	1	24	3
Brent	9	1	42	1
Chibhabha	9	0	64	2
Mazakadza	3	0	14	1
Utseya	10	0	45	0
Price	10	0	41	0
Dabengwa	1	0	9	0
Result: Zimbabwe won by 31 runs.				
Man-of-the-match: Justice Chibhabha.				
Toss: West Indies.				
Umpires: Brian Jerling (RSA) and Kevin Barbour (ZIM).				
Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG).				

Tamim back