

## ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY Pakistan open against WI

AFP, Karachi

Hosts Pakistan and 2006 runners-up the West Indies will open the Champions Trophy on September 11, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Saturday.

"The opening match will be between Pakistan and the West Indies while defending champions and top seed Australia will open its campaign against India on 13 September in Lahore," the ICC said.

The sixth edition of the biennial event, regarded as the second biggest competition in cricket after the World Cup, will run from September 11-28.

An ICC advanced delegation is in Pakistan and has assessed facilities and security arrangements in Lahore and Rawalpindi. They will assess the third venue in Karachi on Sunday.

The eight teams in the 2008 trophy will play on a round-robin basis with two teams from each group progressing to the semifinals.

"As discussed at the ICC Board meeting earlier this week in Dubai, a full independent security assessment of the situation in Pakistan will be conducted in June," the ICC said.

A recent spate of suicide bomb blasts has raised security fears in Pakistan which forced the Australian team to postpone their tour to the troubled country earlier this month.

However, the ICC maintained the event will be held in Pakistan subject to security clearance. Sri Lanka is the alternative venue in case Pakistan is not given clearance.

"As compared to the 2006 tournament when 21 matches were played over 29 days, 15 matches will be played in 17 days this year in what is a much shorter, sharper format," the ICC said.

The first semifinal will be played in Karachi on September 24 while Rawalpindi will host the second semifinal the following day.

The final will be held in Lahore on September 28.

The following are the two groups (with seedings in brackets):

GROUP A: Australia (1), India (4), Pakistan (5), West Indies (8)  
GROUP B: South Africa (2), New Zealand (3), Sri Lanka (6), England (7)

### SCHEDULE

Sept 11	Pak v WI	Lahore
Sept 12	NZ v SL	Karachi
Sept 13	SA v IND	Lahore
Sept 14	ENG v SL	Karachi
Sept 15	SA v NZ	Rawalpindi
Sept 16	WI v IND	Karachi
Sept 17	Pak v AUS	Rawalpindi
Sept 18	SA v SL	Lahore
Sept 19	ENG v NZ	Rawalpindi
Sept 20	Pak v WI	Karachi
Sept 21	AUS v IND	Lahore
	ENG v SA	Rawalpindi
Sept 24	1st Semi	Karachi
Sept 25	2nd Semi	Rawalpindi
Sept 28	Final	Lahore

## Dhoni, Bhajji fit for SA Tests

REUTERS, New Delhi

India vice-captain Mahendra Dhoni and off-spinner Harbhajan Singh passed fitness Tests on Friday ahead of the Test series against South Africa starting next week, the Board of Control for Cricket in India said.

Dhoni, also the limited overs captain, had a finger strain after playing in all matches on the Australia tour where India lost the Tests 2-1 and then beat the hosts 2-0 in the one-day tri-series final.

Harbhajan had a hamstring injury. Leg-spinner Priyush Chawla will join the 14-man squad as the third specialist spinner after left-arm Murali Kartik suffered an ankle injury during a domestic tournament.

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PHOTO: STAR

Shahriar Nafees (L) receives the man-of-the-series trophy from Mirza Ali Behrouze Ispahani (R) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Nafees struck half-centuries in all three ODIs against Ireland including an unbeaten 90 in the first game on March 18.

## An Irish dream

now I am fully motivated since I play international cricket and I can prove these guys wrong. Things happen for a reason in life. I cannot complain for what has happened. DSS: Now on to the World Cup. Did you think you could tie a game against Zimbabwe and even beat a team like Pakistan?

KM: We did remarkably well against Zimbabwe to come back and tie that game. It shouldn't sound arrogant but we knew we could win as we thought, why turn up and just be competitive. We genuinely believed we could win. It was a great day for world cricket since Bangladesh beat India on the same day.

Wicket was green and it was similar to our home wickets. Pakistan were under pressure and they looked apprehensive after seeing the wicket. We bowled good, wicket taking balls and we bowled them out for 130-odd. We prided ourselves in fielding. During the break, our captain (Trent Johnston) asked us "Do you want to go back to your day job as a teacher, farmer, postman or beat Pakistan and stay here for another four weeks?"

DSS: You faced England and beat Bangladesh in the Super Eights. Both must have been big games for you.

KM: It was a game that we believed we could have won and they took the game away from us in the last half-hour. Irish cricket is always fighting against English cricket. It was nice for us to play against the Old Enemy. We thoroughly deserved to win that game against Bangladesh as we played our best cricket against them.

DSS: Your favourite memory in both team and personal fronts.

KM: The Pakistan game and personally, it was nice getting Kevin Pietersen out, caught at mid-wicket by William Porterfield.

There are so many memories that I can share with my grandkids. Mentally it was hard on us as it was a long tournament.

DSS: How was the reaction at home?

KM: Massive. Cricket grabbed the headline for the first time. It gripped the nation. We were invited on to the Late Late show. And if you are on that show, you have made it. The country fell for us. We represented Ireland with huge degree of honour.

DSS: But after that Pakistan match, Bob Woolmer died. What happened that night?

KM: We were not in the same hotel that night. We beat Pakistan and we were at a different hotel celebrating with our fans. The death put everything into perspective that this was just a game and not a matter of life and death. It was a huge shock. He was the first to shake our hands after the defeat.

DSS: After the World Cup, there were problems with your cricket board. Tell us a bit about that.

KM: Two full-time employees -- CEO and our national coach, basically run cricket in Ireland. It is difficult for one man to do the work done by a few hundred people. It just goes to show what difficulties they face.

Irish cricket weren't able to pay players full time but now they pay match fees so it is working hard to make sure things are on the right direction.

To be honest, we take inspiration from Bangladesh's development. We take Bangladesh

cricket as a model to become a bigger cricketing nation.

DSS: Apart from being a school teacher and cricketer, do you have any other hobbies?

KM: I play the guitar. I like Eric Clapton and Mark Weller. I play golf and I try to entertain my wife and in the English Premier League, I follow West Ham.

DSS: Who's your inspiration?

My wife and my parents inspire me hugely. Nelson Mandela is someone I look up to and from the cricketing point of view, I always admired Steve Waugh, with whom I have played in 2000. His mentality was superb as there were no excuses with him.

I played with Saqlain Mushtaq last year and as an off-spinner, I certainly admire him and working with him was interesting.

DSS: What has been the defining moment of your 12-year long career?

KM: Intercontinental Cup in Namibia was a defining moment in Irish cricket and personally I achieved as I took four wickets. World Cup was a defining moment and the game against Pakistan.

DSS: So what of the future?

KM: My primary goal will be to take Ireland to the next World Cup in 2011. But don't think I'll be back to play the tournament. I would like to give the youngsters the same experience I have had.

DSS: Would you come back to Bangladesh?

KM: To be honest with you, I was a little hesitant but since arriving here, I think I like Bangladesh simply because it is my first time here and I would have no hesitation in coming back.

## Tigers get back lost confidence

FROM PAGE 17

one-day appearance. "Hundred is a hundred. I was desperately waiting to feel the taste of a hundred in the international cricket. You know I made few hundreds in the domestic competitions but nothing could be compared with this," said Tamim, nephew of former Bangladesh skipper Akram Khan.

"I didn't raise my bat after completing my fifty because my target was to reach the three-digit mark," he said adding that his elder brother Nafis Iqbal asked him on Friday night to get ready for his maiden century.

The dashing left-hander was asked whether he would thank Andre Botha to reach his marks as the medium-pacer slipped a simple catch when he was on 30.

"It's part of the game. You never know it could have been a six if I hit it properly," he said smilingly.

The young Chittagong praised his opening partner Nafees for the century.

"He (Nafees) asked me to bat till 40-45 overs which helped me to concentrate on my game. I think it's all about confidence which brings you the success," he said.

Nafees was also happy with the outcome as they made 109-run in the opening stand.

"We have been opening the innings for the last one and a half year but could not be successful at all. We talked to each other even off the field and I feel honoured that Tamim praised me for his hundred," said Nafees adding that he always

tries to be consistent in his batting.

The top-order batting, which totally failed against South Africa, once again established one thing that Bangladesh is now far away from the ICC associate members.

And Ireland coach Phil Simmons also believed that.

"I think Bangladesh deserved respect from the cricket pundits because they are a very improving side," said the former West Indies batsman.

**SCOREBOARD**

Scoreboard of the third and final one-day international between Bangladesh and Ireland at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday:

**BANGLADESH**

Iqbal c Porterfield b Langford-Smith 129

Nafees c Strydom b Cusack 54

Aftab b Cusack 0

Ashraf c N O'Brien b K O'Brien 22

Shakib c Porterfield b Langford-Smith 7

Razak c N O'Brien b K O'Brien 2

Mahmudullah not out 49

Mortaza c Porterfield b Langford-Smith 16

Reza not out 0

Extras: (lb-5, w-8, nb-1) 14

Total: (For 7 wts in 50 overs) 293

Did not bat: Dhiman, Razzak.

Fall of wickets: 1-109, 2-109, 3-160, 4-167, 5-178, 6-260, 7-287.

**Bowler**

Langford-Smith 7 0 53 3

K O'Brien 9 0 58 2

Botha 6 0 28 0

Johnston 8 0 55 0

McCallan 10 0 52 0

Cusack 8 1 30 2

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