

Sewta Uday enter final

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

A three-wicket win over Prabhat Sangha ensured Sewta Uday Sena (SUS) enter the final of the Col Malek First Division Cricket League at the local stadium here yesterday.

Batting first, Prabhat scored 240 all out in 50 overs with Shumil scoring 58. In reply, Jam's 82 anchored SUS to the victory in 46.2 overs, losing seven wickets.

SUS will meet Dashara Palli Mangal Samity in the final.

They patch up enmity

CRICINFO, *undated*

Former foes, including Ricky Ponting and Sourav Ganguly, have become Indian Premier League (IPL) team-mates and publicly patched up their differences. Ponting and Ganguly played small parts in Kolkata's 140-run thrashing of Bangalore and set out to work together on the field.

"We've always got on really well right throughout our careers," Ponting said in the Daily Telegraph. "Ganguly mentioned that he wanted to work pretty closely with me to make sure we get everything right on tactics on the field."

Ganguly said any tension between the players was in the past and he was excited about joining forces with Ponting. "Things happen when you compete in series," he said, "and that's over and done and we need to look forward."

Matthew Hayden, one of the key figures in the hearings after the SCG Test, now believes the events surrounding Harbhajan Singh's race charge were "blown out of all proportion". "Bhaji is a true fighter and we enjoy the on-field rivalry," Hayden said. The pair is likely to face off again when Hayden's Chennai take on Harbhajan's Mumbai on Wednesday.

"Whatever happened in Australia was blown out of proportion and has been talked to death," Hayden said. "In fact, playing Bhaji helped me understand how to get into the mind of a spinner."

Shane Warne and Graeme Smith, who had a prickly on-field relationship before the legspinner's international retirement, are in the same team at the Rajasthan Royals, but Warne doesn't expect any problems. "We have had a fair go at each other as opponents but I believe we will jell quickly," he said in the Herald Sun. "He is a competitor and is always up for a scrap, which I like, and I'm sure playing in the same side will be fun." Smith's entry has been delayed while he completes domestic duties in South Africa.

Marauding

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pace mattered not a jot, as balls disappeared over the ground with ridiculous frequency. When Zaheer returned for another spell, McCullum manufactured the stroke of the evening, going down on one knee and scooping the ball over the leg for six.

Praveen, who bowled superbly in his first three overs, had escaped the McCullum onslaught for most of the evening, but he too suffered in the last over of the innings, as the first two balls vanished over midwicket, before McCullum put the final seal on his innings, depositing the last ball on the innings over long-on. That brought his sixes' tally to 13, the most in a Twenty20 innings.

Shahrukh Khan, the owner of the franchise, had danced through the McCullum innings, and he had even more reason to celebrate as his bowlers then got into the act with equal gusto. Rahul Dravid, under immense pressure facing an asking-rate of more than 11, lasted three balls, losing his middle stump while attempting a heave. The loss of the captain started the slide, and it went downhill quickly thereafter.

Kallis mounted the briefest of challenges, lofting Ajit Agarkar over extra cover for a huge six, but fell next ball, pulling tamely to mid-on. The pitch offered some pace and bounce, and Ishant Sharma, especially, exploited it, getting the ball to zip at a fair pace. Agarkar also prised out White, who had held the record for the highest Twenty20 score till a few minutes before Bangalore's only chance was if he produced a similar stunner, but by the time he nicked one off Agarkar the contest was already over. The end came soon after, when Joshi fell to a miscued pull with 29 deliveries still left in the innings.

The match may have been over long before the last ball was bowled, but McCullum's stunner has given the IPL, and Kolkata, a dream start. With Ganguly's team playing their next match at the Eden Gardens, this result should ensure that Sunday's clash against the Deccan Chargers draws a full house, and more. The IPL extravaganza has well and truly begun.

SCORES IN BRIEF
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 222 for 3 in 20 overs (McCullum 158 not out, Ponting 20, D. Hussey 12, Ganguly 10; Zaheer 1-38, Noffke 1-40, Kallis 1-48).
BANGALORE ROYAL CHALLENGERS: 82 all out in 15.1 overs (Kumar 18; Agarkar 3-25, Dinda 2-9, Ganguly 2-21, Sharma 1-7, Shukla 1-12).
Result: Kolkata Knight Riders won by 140 runs.

Toss: Bangalore Royal Challengers. Man-of-the-match: Brendon McCullum.
Umpires: Asad Rauf and Rudi Koertzen.



RAW EMOTION: Serena Williams of the United States exults after her victory over Russian Maria Sharapova during the Family Circle Cup in Charleston on Friday.

Serena downs Maria

Tennis

AFP, *Charleston*

Serena Williams continued her domination of Maria Sharapova with a 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 win in the quarterfinals of the 1.3 million dollar WTA Family Circle Cup on Friday.

Williams improved to 5-2 overall against the Russian who lost for just the second time in 26 matches in 2008.

"In the third set I started to play the Serena game," said the fifth seeded American who has now won four straight against Sharapova. "I'm not new to this."

The tournament lost its top seed and defending champion as Serbian Jelena Jankovic was eliminated.

nated by ninth-seeded Russian Vera Zvonareva 6-2, 3-6, 6-2.

The defeat left Jankovic still in search of her first title of the season.

Zvonareva advanced to a meeting with fourth-seeded compatriot Elena Dementieva, who defeated seventh-seeded Swiss Patty Schnyder 6-4, 6-4.

Williams, 26, will face France's Alize Cornet, a 7-5, 6-4 winner over Hungarian Agnes Szavay.

Williams, the former No. 1 is attempting to capture her third consecutive tournament at this clay court event, having won consecutive titles in Bangalore and Miami.

"This is definitely a big win, but I still want to win the next round and win the tournament," said Williams, who is ranked ninth in the world.

No. 1 Justine Henin.

Facing Williams for the first time on clay, Sharapova was in control early and served for the first set at 5-4.

Williams, however, reeled off the next three games - including two breaks - to steal the set.

"I was lucky to hang in there during the first set," said Williams, who is 17 this season. "In the third set I finally started playing the Serena game."

Sharapova rebounded to even the match at one set apiece, but Williams dominated the decisive third set, opening up a commanding 5-0 lead en route to the win.

Sharapova's record against Williams is just one of two losing marks against current players ranked within the top 10, the other being her 3-6 record against world No. 1 Justine Henin.

Champions League in October?

Cricket

CRICINFO, *undated*

Following the spectacular start to the Indian Premier League (IPL), its organisers have chalked out plans for an inaugural Champions League featuring top domestic Twenty20 sides from several countries.

Cricinfo has learnt the tournament is likely to be held in England between the ICC Champions Trophy - which ends on September 28 - and the first Test between India and Australia, starting October 9. A prominent cricket centre in North India would be the back-up venue - the ICC Champions Trophy final will be in Lahore, a shorthop away.

Details of the Champions League

is that the Champions League, to start, could be a short, single-leg league involving the top two domestic Twenty20 teams from the five countries.

Lalit Modi, who presided over the opening day of the domestic Indian Premier League (IPL) in Bangalore on Friday as its chairman and commissioner, is expected to "get cracking" on the Champions League very soon.

"Informally, a lot of discussions and decisions have happened on the Champions League," an official said. "Everyone wants to be on board and the level of interest has been very high. There was a joint call on how many countries need to participate, the window that is available at that point of time and so on."

However, officials are aware of the potential complications on the way, especially involving Indian teams whose overseas players may have appeared for their home sides in the domestic Twenty20 tournaments. For example, Kolkata Knight Riders, who won the inaugural match, have Ricky Ponting, the Australia captain, and Chris Gayle of West Indies.

"Cricket Australia is one of the keenest supporters of the Champions League," the official said, "and could make a few adjustments if their players need to be released for the event."

Ryder doubtful for Eng tour

Cricket

CRICINFO, *undated*

Jesse Ryder should have been happy at securing a New Zealand Cricket contract on Monday but instead the prospect of potentially missing the ODI tour of England was weighing him down. Ryder was one of the 20 men to be offered national deals for 2008-09 and although he said he was "stoked" to get the news, his ongoing hand injury remained a concern.

Ryder sustained tendon damage around his thumb and forefinger when he punched a window in a bar in February. He was therefore unavailable for the Test series in England but was picked for the ODIs, which start in June, although even that could be too soon for a return. "My main worry is the hand, it's going to be tough and go," Ryder told the Dominion Post.

He is hoping to start batting by the end of the month and, provided

Rules bent

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Dwayne Bravo is to play for the Sachin Tendulkar-led Mumbai Indians which could not be confirmed as sources in the squad could only say "we were having negotiations with the player but do not know their outcome" when they were informed of the development.

Strangely, the website does not have any information about the playing conditions for the much-hyped-about event which has drawn the attention of the cricket world because of the amount of money that had been spent to buy the players through the auction process, something unique to the willow game.

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For those that came to cheer the local contingent, this was a day to forget. B Akhil, Sunil Joshi and Dravid made five runs between them, and Joshi's three overs went for 26. In the field, Joshi looked very much like a man who'll turn 37 in June, while Akhil too had a couple of blunders to forget.

The contrast with one of Kolkata's local boys couldn't have been more stark. Ashok Dinda cleaned up Virat Kohli, India's Under-19 captain, and then had Wasim Jaffer caught at slip during an excellent spell. It helped of course to have a mountain of runs behind him, but it was the sort of performance that's needed if the stated aim of giving young domestic cricketers a fillip is to be achieved.

As a spectacle, Bangalore has laid down the marker for the rest of the league. A full Eden Gardens could conceivably match it, and hopefully the matches that follow will be more a contest, and less a one-man show. But what a show it was. The 700,000 dollars that Shahrukh Khan and friends forked out is already looking like a steal.

\$100m offered for five games

AFP, *London*

England are set to be offered 100 million dollars (50 million pounds) to play five Twenty20 matches against a West Indies all-star side, according to reports here on Saturday.

The England and Wales Cricket board (ECB) this week revealed they were "very likely" to accept around 10 million pounds (20m dollars) for a one-off match in the Caribbean that would be the richest single game in the sport's history.

The idea is the brainchild of Sir Allen Stanford, the billionaire banker from Texas, who finances the Stanford 20/20 Tournament in the West Indies, and who wants to expand the concept.

Stanford wants England to play five Twenty20 games against his West Indies all-star side, the first to coincide with Independence Day in Antigua on November 1.

And he held talks with ECB chief executive David Collier on Tuesday.

"I talked to David about the first game and then how we could collaborate in the future," Stanford told the Times.

"I said that it could be an annual event, maybe we could come to Lord's in 2009 and then alternate."

"I would be happy to make a five-year commitment."

Asked if that meant a total input of US dollars 100 million, he said: "I would be willing to do it."

"The money is real and I think we will get a game."

"David is a great guy and we seem to be on the same page."

Bad overs are a bit of a feature of Anderson's game. In Kandy before Christmas, he was clubbed for six fours in consecutive balls by Sanath Jayasuriya, and in Napier, he suffered arguably a greater ignominy, as Bell -- a batsman who had failed to pass 30 off 50 for 30 off 50, his first five-wicket haul in three visits.

Anderson returns to competitive action for Lancashire next week, but the countdown is already on for the first Test of the rematch against New Zealand at Lord's on May 15. It is a venue at which Anderson enjoys bowling, and against India last summer, he picked up his second five-wicket haul in three visits.

"It's a nice place to bowl -- there is a nice slope, and it generally swings here," said Anderson. "My mentality might change if the ball is swinging. Like in Wellington, I might bowl more attacking lines and I might be happier going for more runs than

James eyes Lord's Test

Cricket

CRICINFO, *undated*

rhythm do it like I did in Wellington."

"I call myself a strike bowler, and the way I see myself is getting wickets," he said. "But when you play against a team like New Zealand, who want to hit boundaries, you want to stop them doing that. Sometimes that might be about bowling maidens to get that pressure."

Anderson suffered an injury setback during the Wellington Test, when he twisted his ankle in a warm-down game of football, but by and large, he said he felt as comfortable in his run-up and action as he has been for several years. There was a period around 2004-05 when Anderson's action, which involves an awkward dipping of the head at point of delivery, was completely deconstructed by the England coaching staff. But all that, he believes, is now behind him.

"I think I have gone full circle now," he said. "I have played for five years now, and I think technically and physically my action is as good as it is going to get. I am comfortable now it feels really natural, and I don't think there is an awful lot more I can do with it. When I first started, my leading arm was somewhere behind the back of my head. Now it is somewhere where it feels comfortable."

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I would do if it wasn't swinging. I just think you do better at some grounds than others. I don't up my game when I play here, it just happens."

There is no guarantee that Anderson will feature in the first Test, however. His poor showing in Napier has given hope of a recall to Matthew Hoggard and Steve Harmison, the men who made way for his Wellington comeback, and also looming on the horizon is Anderson's Lancashire teammate, Andrew Flintoff, who has completed 28 overs in his comeback match at Surrey -- his heaviest workload since the Brisbane Test in November 2006.

"It's going to be a real battle for places. No-one's place is set in stone," said Anderson. "We have all got to perform in the first couple of games of the season. Hogg and Harmy are going to be fighting like mad to try and get their places back, then you have got the other guys like Chris Tremlett, Liam Plunkett and Saj (Mahmood) at Lancashire too. There are a lot of people in the hat."

As for Flintoff, Anderson was cautiously optimistic that -- after four ankle operations -- he might this time get back to his best form. "Every time he has an operation he has come back strong," said Anderson. "So it is just whether this time it is for good. He has always been pretty fit, and his bowling always seems to look after itself. He gets it down at good speeds when he needs to."

From his own point of view, Anderson knows what he needs to do to cement his place in the England team. "Fitness wise I am fine, so the only issue is mental," he said. "I know I can bowl that well, it is just about figuring out what went wrong in that game (at Napier). A lot of it is about rhythm and just being relaxed, and not trying to fight myself and bowl quicker when it is not going so well."

Setting the bar

Cricket

CRICINFO, *undated*

One of the few less-publicised aspects of the Indian Premier League (IPL) concerns the orange helmet kept at each of the eight franchise venues. After each round of matches this strange accessory -- the IPL's answer to the Tour de France's yellow jersey -- is handed to the competition's