

Koreas scrap a draw

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Bitter rivals North Korea and South Korea fought out a 1-1 draw in the latest round of final Asian 2010 World Cup qualifiers on Wednesday while Australia got their campaign off to a winning start.

The Aussies handed Uzbekistan a 1-0 defeat in Tashkent thanks to a rare international goal from Scott Chipperfield - playing only his second international in 19 months - as they bid to reach their second successive finals.

The Uzbeks hopes of reaching the finals for the first time look remote after two successive defeats as do those of the UAE - they lost to North Korea in their opening match at the weekend - after they let a 1-0 lead slip, ending up losing 2-1 to Asian giants Saudi Arabia.

The other match ended 1-1 between a 10-man Bahrain and Qatar, who also missed a penalty.

The Korean neighbours fought out a tedious affair played in the neutral city of Shanghai, with only about 500 fans turning up at the Hongkou Stadium.

They saw North Korean Hong Yong-Jo convert a penalty in the 63rd minute but the South's Ki Sung-Yeung scored five minutes later to salvage the draw.

This was the fourth draw between the rivals in 2008 alone, although the North will be disappointed not to have come away with a victory.

This was the South's first game in this final qualification phase.

"We were so close to getting the win," said North Korean head coach Kim Jong-Hun. "But our players did their best. We have played one more game and we were a bit more tired than the South Koreans."

South Korean coach Huh Jung-Moo said he wasn't pleased with the result. "There was so much

pressure on us to win this game and that affected our team tonight," he said, referring to the rivalry between the teams and the countries.

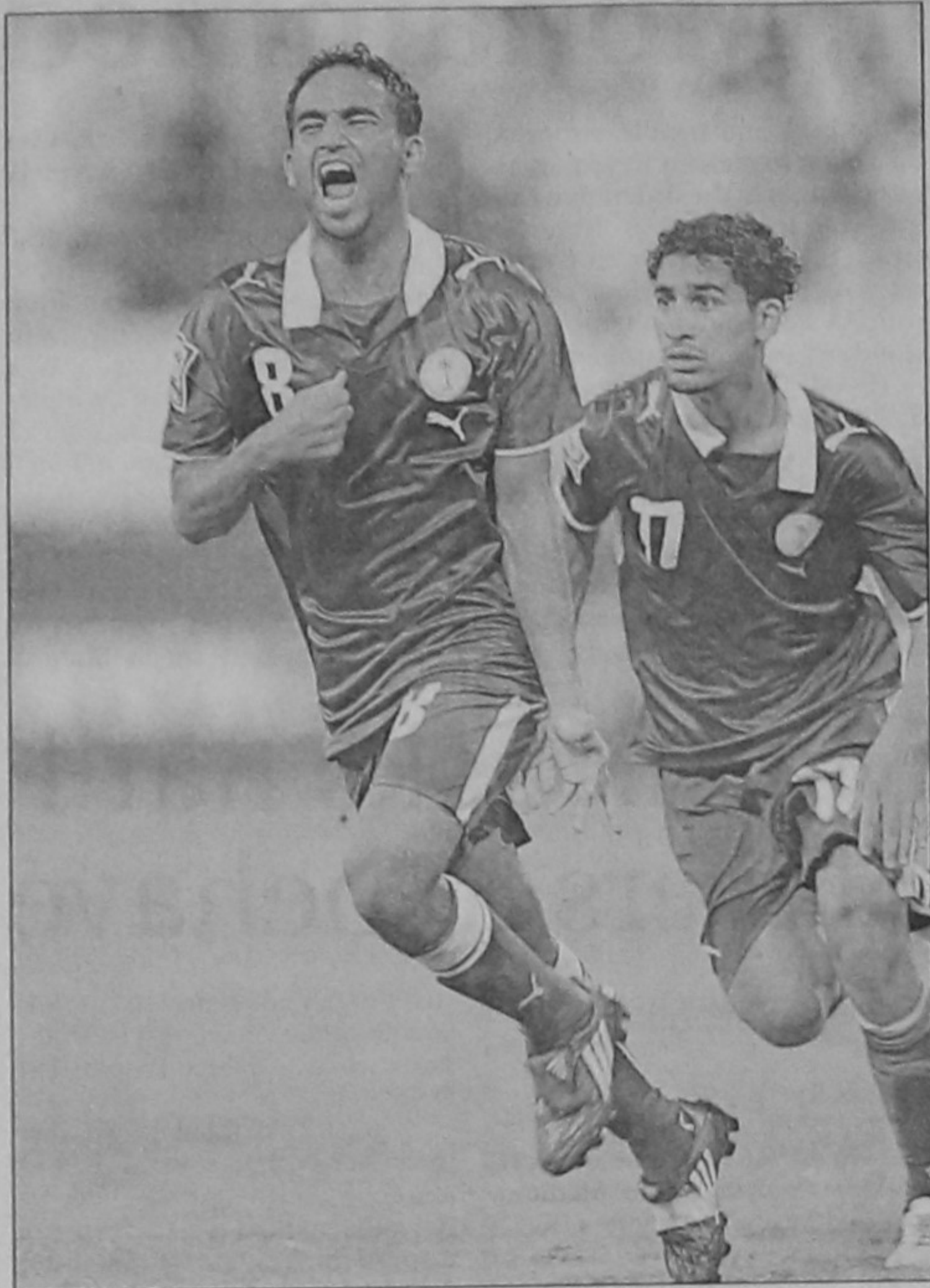
"But we still have games left and I believe we're good enough to reach the World Cup."

North Korea next visit Iran, on October 15. On the same day the

South will host the United Arab Emirates in Seoul.

The Uzbeks' survival now hinges on their crucial away match against Japan in Saitama on October 15, while the Australians' next assignment is a home match against Qatar in Brisbane on the same night.

Coach Pim Verbeek was



Saudi Arabia's Abdo Autef (L) is ecstatic after scoring against the United Arab Emirates during their 2010 World Cup qualifying match at Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. Saudi Arabia came back from a goal down to defeat the United Arab Emirates 2-1.

delighted with the commitment of his Australian players in the intimidating atmosphere of the Pakhtakor stadium.

"Football-wise we have played better games, but if you look for the commitment and attitude of the boys and the way they worked hard for each other, I think they did a great job," Verbeek said.

The Saudi's result saw them go top of Group B alongside North Korea with four points, while UAE are at the bottom of the table, yet to open their account.

A delighted Saudi captain Yasser Al Kahtani, who came in as a substitute in the 46th minute, said: "This is a wonderful result for us, especially after the draw against Iran. It was a superb performance from the team to come back from one goal behind."

"The UAE were playing really well and putting us under a lot of pressure."

Qatar, who made other teams in Asia sit up and take notice during their 3-0 demolition of Uzbekistan last Saturday, failed to take advantage of several chances, including a penalty, to allow the Bahrainis take a valuable point from their away match.

Sebastian Soria put Qatar ahead as early as the fifth minute after receiving a long pass from deep, but the Uruguayan-born striker, who has shouldered most of Qatar's burden in the forward line throughout the qualifying phases, failed to put away a penalty later in the first half.

Bahrain were dealt a huge blow when Abdulla Marzooqi was sent off in the first session with his second yellow card of the match, but Qatar failed to nail home the numerical advantage they had.

And Bahrain made them pay when Abdulla Baba Fatadi slotted the ball home from the edge of the penalty area after receiving a pass from Nigerian-born Jaycee John.

Ganguly back in training

PTI, Kolkata

Scotching speculations of retirement after he was left out for the Rest of India squad in Irani Trophy, former India captain Sourav Ganguly on Thursday resumed his rigorous training and net session at Eden Gardens.

Upset after being ignored for the 14-member squad, meant for probabilities for the four-Test series against Australia, Ganguly had not turned up for practice from Monday to Wednesday.

"But today (Thursday), he came early in the morning, waited for 20 minutes for all of us to turn up and trained at the gym for one hour and 10 minutes before joining the Bengal Ranji probables in the nets," Bengal trainer Chinnroy Roy said.

Incidentally, Roy was away in Thiruvananthapuram but a "keen for comeback" Ganguly phoned the trainer, asking him to come back.

Roy added that Ganguly was at the nets for close to 40 minutes, facing all the Bengal bowlers.

Sidelined by the Dilip Vengsarkar-chaired national selectors, Ganguly hopes to make yet another return when the new selection committee is appointed ahead of the Australia series.

Ganguly, in an interview recently to a British tabloid, said he was not mulling on retirement and has a couple of years left in him.

India-Aus bigger than Ashes, reckons Katich

INTERNET, undated

Australian batsman Simon Katich reckons his team's rivalry against India has become "bigger" than the Ashes in recent times and predicts the upcoming Test series in October will be tough for his side.

Katich, who is currently in India leading the Australia 'A' team, said beating India at home in 2004 was one of the greatest victories for Australia and the team was geared up to repeat the feat.

Asked whether a series against India was bigger than the Ashes, Katich said, "Definitely. I feel the hard-fought series in 2001 when India won that Test match in Kolkata after being down in the dumps triggered this fascinating rivalry."

"Later we beat India in their own backyard in 2004 after 35 odd years and got the much desired revenge. It was one of the greatest victories for us. Once again India came to Australia last year and it was a fantastic series. This year in October once again it's going to be a toughie for us. I can't wait for it," he told Cricketer magazine.

Recalling the tour of 2004, he said the Australian quick bowlers did a fantastic job getting the ball to reverse.

"That definitely helped us beat the Indians. Shane Warne's contributions can be easily forgotten since the quickies grabbed all the wickets but honestly he played the role of support bowler really well and got the breakthroughs at crucial junctures," he said.

Manik asks nat'l players

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eager to play under me. It was learned that Ujjal has fallen out with his club and wants out after being ignored for selection in the later stages of the Federation Cup.

He was issued a show-cause for playing on hire and since then, the relation deteriorated for the striker-turned-attacking midfielder.

Although Ujjal trained with Abahani yesterday, it is still uncertain whether he would revive the rapport with the Sky-blues again or not.

Commenting on club strength, Manik later said that Abahani and Mohammedan are well equipped for the long run of a league.

"Both have strong reserve bench which is vital. Moham medan look positive after winning the Federation Cup but it is difficult to predict after a tournament how a team would do in a league."

"I have eight players from Mohammedan and 11 from Abahani in my squad. Moham medan have some difficulties at the wing and it seems that their coach has yet to find a solution at the left side. He has tried both Kamal and Faisal Mahmud and should have stuck to one after playing six matches. They should also stop second-half experiments."

"For Abahani having too much player in the same position -- they have five good stoppers -- could be a curse. They must find the right formation, they suddenly switched to 3-5-2 in the Federation Cup final

Bolt could've

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he told reporters at the games. Hans Eriksen, of the institute of theoretical astrophysics at the University of Oslo in Norway, and colleagues analysed television footage of the race, focusing on "Lightning Bolt" and the second-placed athlete, Richard Thompson.

Both sprinters slowed down in the final two seconds of the race, but Bolt's high jinks cut his speed more.

If he had slowed down by the same amount as Thompson he would have notched up a time of 9.61 seconds. But since Bolt comprehensively out-performed Thompson over the first eight seconds the scientists considered that that calculation might be too conservative. They estimate that if Bolt had decelerated less sharply he would have finished in a time of 9.55 seconds.

"We don't mean to say that this is the final and ultimate result," Eriksen told New Scientist magazine. "Instead, it's a fun application of simple physics, and we've done the best we can."

It is difficult to get accurate measurements from ordinary TV footage, which records at 30 frames a second or less, said Matthew Bundle, of the University of Wyoming, Laramie, who studies human locomotion. But he said the times estimated by the researchers were reasonable.

and looked uncomfortable, and how well they can use the talent is vital for success.

"Brothers also have many representatives in the national side but their fate will depend on how good foreign collection they recruit. Sheikh Russel's defence is not very strong and they also lack a good defensive midfielder."

Commenting on Mukhtijodha, where Manik spent over a decade as coach, he said: "They are weak and don't have enough fund to run the camp. It's difficult for them to get quality foreigners in this stage. I believe Farshganj will overtake them in the table"

Meanwhile, there was good news for Manik's boys as the Bangladesh Football Federation is planning to introduce salary

Revenge is a dish

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attempted to connect with Walcott's volleyed cross. Minutes later, England were in front, thanks to a mix-up in the heart of the Croatian defence. Pranjic's attempt to find touch clattered into Robert Kovac and sent the ball into Walcott's path to the right of the goalmouth.

The teenager's initial touches had not all been far from assured. But he was a model of composure as he took a touch before directing a low drive towards the far corner that Stipe Pletikosa got a hand too but could not keep out.

Simunic had a let-off at the start of the second half after tripping Rooney on the edge of the area but referee Lubos Michel was left with no option but to finally brandish a red when Robert Kovac left Joe Cole reeling with a vicious challenge from behind soon afterwards.

England exploited the numerical advantage brilliantly Cutting in from the inside left channel, Rooney combined deftly with Heskey on the edge of the area

It goes to Chanderpaul

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win their first Test series in England since 1965.

India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni was named as the one-day player of the year, while his team-mate Yuvraj Singh won the inaugural international Twenty20 performance of the year award after striking six sixes off an over from England quick Stuart Broad during last year's World Twenty20 in South Africa.

Sri Lanka's 'mystery' spinner Ajantha Mendis was chosen as the emerging player of the year while England captain Charlotte Edwards was named as the women's player of the year.

Australia's Simon Taufel, the only man ever to win his award, was named as umpire of the year for the fifth time in a row.

Dutch all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate won the Associate

structure for the national footballers round the year.

"We are thinking to bring 15 to 20 national players under payroll in three categories," said BFF vice president and national team management committee chairman Badal Roy.

Badal informed that the salary would be at least Tk 10,000 for C category and Tk 20,000 for A category.

"Nothing is finalised yet and it depends on how much we get from national team sponsors. WE have been talking with corporate houses and hope to make a deal before the Merdeka Cup said Badal adding that he has received Ujjal's letter and will try to talk with the player and change his decision.

Simon loved Yuvraj sixes

PTI, Dubai

Simon Taufel, the man officiating at the all-important end during the over when Yuvraj Singh hit sixes that won him the ICC award, said it was "quite an experience" watching the Indian unleash his array of strokes.

"It was quite an experience," Taufel told reporters on Wednesday night on the sidelines of the ICC Awards 2008 after Yuvraj bagged the International Performance of the Year Award 2008 for slugging sixes off Stuart Broad at the 20-20 World Cup match between India and England in South Africa.

Taufel himself bagged the Best Umpire Award for the fifth consecutive year.

Asked about the pressure of converting the final deliveries into sixes after hitting the first four, Yuvraj said it was the other way around.

"When you hit four sixes, the pressure is on the bowler. There were some butterflies in my stomach but I backed myself and hit two more sixes," Yuvraj said.

'It's all due to Murali'

INTERNET, undated

Sri Lanka star Ajantha Mendis hailed the influence of fellow spinner Muttiah Muralidaran after being named ICC Emerging Player of the Year.

Mendis was handed the honour at cricket's annual awards ceremony in Dubai on Wednesday thanks to a fine performance in the Test and one-day series against India.

Mendis burst to prominence with a six-wicket haul against India in the final of the Asia Cup.

He then helped Sri Lanka secure a 2-1 Test series against India, finishing with a haul of 26 wickets.

Mendis also finished the top wicket-taker in the one-day series with 13 scalps.

"I never dreamt of this a year ago," Mendis said through an interpreter after receiving the award.

"It has been fantastic playing for Sri Lanka."

"I picked up a lot of wickets only because Murali was bowling at the other end."

"He put a lot of pressure on the batsmen and so I got the opportunity to get the wickets."

"He also guided me on how to control the ball and how to be patient while bowling against a top-class batting line-up."

"But the most important thing he taught me was to never be afraid of the opposition."

"He also taught me the importance of planning a batsman's dismissal."

Army, Comilla on top

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army and Comilla lead the Trust Bank 8th National Taekwondo Championships, securing four gold medals each on the second day of the three-day meet at the National Sports Council gymnasium yesterday.

Bangladesh Rifles followed the leaders with three gold medals.

Trust Bank deputy managing director Ishtiaque Ahmed Chowdhury witnessed the second day's competition and later he distributed the prizes among the day's winners.

A total of 13 competitions of different weight categories were decided on the day.

Some 550 competitors, including 250 women from 27 districts, clubs and universities are taking part in 42-weight categories.

Div II football

SPORTS REPORTER

Prantik Krira Chakra notched an emphatic 3-0 win over Kadamtala Sangsad in a match of the Second Division Football League at the Kamalapur Stadium yesterday.

Sabuj, Sagar and Rubel scored in the 53rd, 75th and 78th minutes respectively.

In the day's other match at the same venue, T&T Club edged past Basabo Tarun Sangha by a solitary goal scored by Jewel in the 8th minute.

In today's matches, Sadharan Bima face Matuail Udayan Sangsad and Gazirchot take on Friends Social Welfare Organisation.

DU chess on

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka University (DU) Chess Championship began at the TSC Cafe yesterday.

Organised by the university's Chess Club, 115 students are taking part in the competition.

The tournament will be played on the Swiss League basis in seven rounds.

Former Dean of Business Studies Dr M Sirajul Islam was present on the opening ceremony as chief guest.

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ESPN-STAR ropes in 900m dollar league

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Twenty20 cricket's brand value rose to new heights on Thursday after pan-Asian ESPN-STAR network agreed to pay 900 million dollars for the proposed T20 Champions League.

The network was awarded the global commercial rights of the inter-club tournament for the next 10 years with the inaugural event set to be played from December 3-10 at venues yet to be decided.

The deal makes the tournament the highest valued cricket event on a per-game basis, according to a statement from the organisers that comprise the Australian, Indian and South African cricket boards.

ESPN-STAR, owned jointly by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and Walt Disney, were awarded the rights after bids were opened in Dubai late Wednesday on the sidelines of the International Cricket Council's annual awards

night. "We have what we believe to be the best commercial deal for the inaugural Champions League Twenty20 season and for cricket fans across the world," said Indian Premier League commissioner Lalit Modi.

ESPN-STAR, which also holds the rights for all ICC events including the World Cup, Champions Trophy and the T20 Worlds, said they were delighted to add the Champions League to their lineup.

"This is a testament to our commitment to the game of cricket and fans as we cement our relationship with the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Cricket Australia and Cricket South Africa," said ESPN-STAR managing director Manu Sawhney.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said the Champions League will enhance the game's popularity at the grassroots level.

"The Champions League Twenty20 will build on the success

of domestic Twenty20 leagues in Australia and elsewhere in a manner which accelerates the development of cricket globally," said Sutherland.

"The benefits of this global event will greatly enhance cricket at the grassroots level, particularly for state-level players who get the chance to pit their skills against players from around the world."

The inaugural Champions League in December will feature eight domestic teams, with two each from Australia, India and South Africa and one each from England and Pakistan.

The organisers have set September 25-October 10, 2009 as the dates for the League's second edition which will be expanded to 12 teams.

The recent boom in Twenty20 cricket, sparked by the lucrative Indian Premier League this year, has led to growing concerns about the future of traditional Test and one-day cricket.

Swann doesn't fly

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

The last time Graeme Swann spoke about what he would do with "300 grand after tax" if England win their Twenty20 match against Sir Allen Stanford's West Indies All Stars in Antigua on November 1, he joked that he would "buy a bright pink Ferrari or something like that".

But Tuesday's announcement of the 15-man squad, which included Swann, may have imposed a different mindset. After all, the England team will be travelling not merely to another continent but to a whole new world -- one in which the 1 million-dollar-a-player reward for victory represents Swann's annual salary with Nottinghamshire half a dozen times over. It's almost too much to take in.

"I haven't spent my time thinking about what I'm going to spend it on," he says, and he really sounds as if he means it. "We've still got to win the thing, after all, so there's no point spending money in your head that you haven't got yet. I get the feeling people expect us to go out there and beat them but West Indies are a very good Twenty20 side. I watched the Stanford series (involving the Caribbean islands) and while some of the players weren't the best there are still a few who hit the ball miles. They could beat anyone. In fact, they gave us a pumping at The Oval last year."

Swann, who two days ago was one of seven players to receive one

of the England and Wales Cricket Board's new increment contracts -- essentially a county wage topped up by international appearance fees -- has previously called himself "the world's worst person with money", and there is certainly a sense that he is less financially orientated than some of his England team-mates.

He even says he's looking forward to the seven-match one-day series in India -- "some of the more far-out places should be a real experience" -- more than he is to the Stanford knockabout.

Given the presence of Guwahati and Jamshedpur on the Indian itinerary, it is a refreshing outlook at a time when dollar signs are in danger of supplanting runs and wickets as the first-class cricketer's common currency. But Swann is as aware as any of his 14 colleagues that the difference between playing and sitting in the dugout amounts to well over £400,000 -- always assuming victory, of course. It is a figure that would cause the most laid-back character to sit up and take notice.

"We won't know about that until it happens," he says. "I hope the team is strong enough to deal with any situation but it's inevitable that, if you're left out and you think you should be playing, it's going to play on your mind. But I think the team is heading in the right direction -- it's something we can deal with."

Being a naturally ebullient sort, Swann is hopeful that his brand of chirpy off-spin and lower-order hitting, allied with some decent Twenty20 stats -- he has conceded just 6.65 runs an over in 37 games

of Notts and England -- will ease his path into the final XI. But, contrary to the speculation, he does not believe the selectors necessarily need to decide between him and his county teammate Samit Patel, whose left-arm spin and No 6 batting earned him promotion ahead of Swann during the recent 4-0 win over South Africa and brought a five-wicket haul during the win at The Oval.

"Spin has been massively important to Twenty20 cricket," he says. "We weren't expected to do very well but bowling in this format is something that really excites me. It's ideal to get the batsman to put the power on the ball. Look at how well Middlesex did with Murali Kartik and Shaun Udal. I've got a good Twenty20 record and I'm hoping that will see me into the starting XI. I'd honestly play three or four spinners in every game unless you're on a glass wicket and I'm not being facetious when I say that."

And there is nothing facetious about his defence of Steve Harmison, who has been piqued by the suggestion -- aired only implicitly thus far -- that his return to the one-day set-up has come at a moment that is too convenient for comfort. "Some of the press have been calling Harmy greedy, even though he came out of retirement because he fitted in with Kevin Pietersen's plans for England's one-day team," says Swann. "It's nigh on ludicrous to accuse him of being a greedy money-grabber. I guess some people in the press just don't like him and have an axe to grind."

Another year for archrivals

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Sheikh Russel have roped in a fourth Moroccan, the right guard Iqur Mohamed, to strengthen the midfield.

Former national winger Wasim Iqbal, who has taken over Brothers Union this season, feels that the "Oranges' success in the just concluded futsal competition would be an inspiration.

"The boys needed that. But what we need is quality foreign strikers because that is the zone where we have lacks. That's one of the reasons we went out of the Fed Cup from the group stage," said Wasim.

"A few foreigners trained with us but I have told the management that I would not settle for any of them."

Wasim has a good collection of local players, second best to Abahani, but they will need someone like Junior, the Nigerian who was top scorer of 2007 B. League.

It was learned that Brothers is in touch with Junior, who is playing in Finland and would only be available once the league concludes.

With last year's third Mukhtijodha written off as potential title contenders after the Reds lost much of their strength and failed to get beyond the Fed Cup group stage, Farshganj will look to finish among top 5.

But highly ambitious coach Kamal Babu says his side are eyeing the championship.

"Why not? I don't think that

regarding performance and fitness, my team are not behind the big ones," said Kamal whose side maintained an all-win record in the Fed Cup until losing 2-1 to Abahani in the semi.

"Our team work is good but we needed more than 19 local players for the long run. That is why we had to include three foreigners including Arambagh's Dominic."

The lure for the