

ICL offers to release Kiwis

CRICINFO, undated

The New Zealand players involved in the ICL have received an e-mail from the tournament's organizers stating that they will be released from their contracts if they request for a termination, New Zealand's Sunday News has reported.

Justin Vaughan, the chief executive of New Zealand Cricket (NZC), told the paper that if these players end their association with the unofficial league, they will be immediately available for selection to the New Zealand national side.

Besides fast bowlers Shane Bond and Daryll Tuffey, the other active New Zealand players who are part of the ICL are all-rounder Andrew Adams and batsman Lou Vincent. "We wouldn't stand in the way of any players returning to the Black Caps if they aren't tied to the ICL," Vaughan said.

"We've made it pretty clear from the start that while we can't select players for New Zealand who are contracted to the ICL, if they end their ties with the league they would be immediately reconsidered for the national side."

Senior ICL officials were not available for comment when contacted by Cricinfo.

The ICL had cancelled its March-April international programme due to the deepening economic recession and non-availability of Pakistan players. The unauthorised league has also placed on hold its payments to several players pending a performance appraisal. Besides, recent reports have suggested that several Pakistan cricketers who are a part of the Lahore Badshahs, the biggest draw-card of the ICL, want to sever their links with the league and return to international cricket.

IPL-styled

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Taherul Alam Swapan and SM Nasir Khan. AZM Nasir placed the demand for PCL at yesterday's meeting while Sirajuddin Mohammad Alamgir, general secretary of CDKS and a BCB member, gave an outline of the proposed tournament.

"The PCL will definitely usher in a new era and enthusiasm in the sports arena of Chittagong as well as Bangladesh, and we are extremely happy that the BCB gave us the much-needed permission," Ali Abbas told this correspondent over phone after the meeting.

He said the BCB officials however asked the CDKS delegation to feed them back with some more information about the tournament immediately. These include a complete budget, format (knock out or league), complete project profile and plans to upgrade the flood light system of Chittagong MA Aziz Stadium where the PCL would be played under lights, he added.

"As per our initial plan, a total of eight teams will play in the nine-day tournament for which national 'pool' players will be drawn in discussion with concerned organisations," CDKS General Secretary Alamgir said.

He said the budget is expected in-between Tk 60 lakh to Tk 70 lakh and players will get Tk 25,000 per match. "An auction of around 60 cricketers may take place," Alamgir informed.

"There also will be the option for the participating teams to choose sponsors," he said.

Becks happy

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on and couldn't wait to get to that 109. "I said during the week that when I equalled the record I got a note from Stephanie Moore (wife of the late Bobby Moore) saying 'congratulations' and Bobby would have been so proud."

Shilton had complained that he is unhappy Beckham is racking up caps as a substitute, but the AC Milan player received great support from the Wembley crowd as he entered the pitch for the second half.

He insisted that there were no pre-match butterflies. "I wasn't nervous - I'm still nervous playing football and playing at Wembley for England now it's worrying," he said.

Beckham reiterated that his time in Milan has played a big part in his continued renaissance in an England shirt.

"I knew and I've always known throughout my career that if I'm fit and in top shape then I can play to my best. Obviously Milan's done that," he said.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Sadharan Bima and Badda Ekata were relegated to second division after the relegation playoffs of the First Division Cricket League ended yesterday.

Bima defeated Badda by 17 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium in a match of the table-propping sides that was reduced to 20 overs following overnight rain. In reply to Bima's 157-5, Badda managed 140-7.

In another shortened 23-over a-side playoff, Rupali Bank (93-4) beat Uttara Club (92) by six wickets at the Dhaka University ground.

CHESS

FM Abu Sufian Shakil shared points with FM Mehdi Hasan Parag in the sixth round of the preliminary phase of the Mercantile Bank 35th National Chess Championship at the federation hall-room.

The pair increased their tallies to 5.5 points to share the top spot with FM Taibur Rahman, who beat Mahtabuddin Ahmed in the sixth round.

FM Khondokar Aminul Islam, FM Syed Mahfuzur

Rahman Emon, Debaraj Chatterjee and Shafiq Ahmed followed the leaders with five points each.

RANGS VOLLEYBALL

Gaibandha Correspondent adds: GKSP Club blanked Azad Sporting Club in straight sets while Nabarun Krira Chakra also defeated Supanthei Club 3-0 in the Rangs National Volleyball League at the Gaibandha Stadium.

DIV 3 CRICKET

In the third division cricket league, Tasin Hasin CA defeated Bodyline CCS by 27 runs. Hillol JS edged Chandpur CA by one wicket, Police beat Azad Boys by two wickets while the match between Young Pegasus A and Pragati Seba Sangha ended in a tie after both the teams finished on 234.

FOOTBALL CAMP

The first semester of Canary Wharf Football Academy's third year's football camp will begin at the Dhaka University ground on April 2. The trainees have been requested to report to chief coordinator Fazlur Rahman Babul at the ground on the same day at 5pm.

National

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"We have started training for the SA Games and hope to win at least four gold medals." Bangladesh, however, failed to win a single gold at the Colombo Games in 2006.

Istiaq said they are trying to increase the federation's earning from Tk 90 lakh to Tk three crore per year by renting its community centre in a bid to provide allowances to shooters and import modern arms and ammunition for them.

Mosharrar Hossain, managing director of sponsor IFIC Bank said that they want to continue assistance to the federation with a view to take the sport's standard to world level.

BSF vice president Kutubuddin Aksir, treasurer Kshem Humayun, Bangladesh Olympic Association vice-president Mizanur Rahman Manu were also present.

NSF president Maj Gen Mohammad Ashab Uddin will inaugurate the 5-day meet while BSKP's DG Brig Gen M Shawkat Hossain and IFIC Bank chairman Lutfar Rahman will be present as special guest.

Van der Merwe wins a call-up

CRICINFO STAFF

Allrounder Roelof van der Merwe's impressive international debut in the Twenty20 against Australia at Centurion on Sunday has earned him a place in the one-day squad for the first two matches. van der Merwe top scored with 48 and took the wicket of David Hussey with his left-arm spin to set up the team's 17-run win and bag the Man-of-the-Match award.

Chief selector Mike Procter said van der Merwe will be a welcome addition to the squad for the injured Jacques Kallis.

"Roelof as an allrounder provides us with cover for Jacques Kallis who is recovering from a groin injury," Procter said. "Jacques' fitness will be assessed by our medical team when the squad assembles in Durban today."

South Africa experimented with their line-up for Sunday's match, resting Dale Steyn and Hashim Amla among others to try out their Twenty20 stars and Procter was excited by the young talent.

"Roelof, Yusuf Abdulla and Robin Peterson have all performed outstandingly from the opportunities they have been given which is extremely encouraging. It enables us to broaden the base of our playing talent and gives us some exciting options when we select the squad for the ICC World Twenty20 in England in June," Procter said.

"Although he is not part of the ODI squad, Yusuf Abdulla will practise with the Proteas this week to give him another opportunity to work within the national team environment."

The first two ODIs are at Kingsmead and Centurion on Friday and Sunday.

Javed back

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my abilities," Miandad told AFP, adding that he would also serve as adviser to the PCB chairman.

"I am thankful to the chairman who was kind and asked me to help him as his adviser also. I never had any terms and conditions before, and there will be none now because I believe in the service of the game," said Miandad.

Socceroos

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against each other with the winner then challenging New Zealand for the final berth available.

With Japan well placed to join Australia in the finals, Uzbekistan, Qatar and Bahrain are all focused on making the play-offs.

"We have lost our last three matches and we haven't scored any goals, but this happens in football. We still have a chance to qualify for the play-off stage," said Qatar coach Bruno Metsu ahead of his team's trip to Bahrain.

"Uzbekistan, Bahrain and Qatar all have the same number of points and all of them are at the same level."

North Korea top Group B on 10 points from their southern neighbours who have eight. They face-off as the North prepares to launch a suspected ballistic missile, with tensions high on the Korean peninsula.

Strauss steers

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Sarwan b Flintoff 6 Chanderpaul c Prior b Mascarenhas 27 Ramdin c Flintoff b Mascarenhas 26 Bravo c Bell b Broad 69 Pollard c Flintoff b Mascarenhas 0 Sammy b Broad 6 Miller not out 10 Edwards c Collingwood b Anderson 0 Baker not out 11 Extras: (w-7, nb-2) 9 Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs) 239 Fall of wickets: 1-72, 2-76, 3-83, 4-126, 5-143, 6-145, 7-173, 8-224, 9-225.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Anderson, Broad, Flintoff, Harmison, Mascarenhas, Pollard, Sammy, Miller, Edwards, Baker.

England Strauss not out 79 Bopara c Miller b Pollard 35 Prior not out 14 Extras: (lb-3, w-5) 8 Total: (For 1 wkt in 18.3 overs) 136 Did not bat: Pietersen, Shah, Collingwood, Flintoff, Mascarenhas, Broad, Anderson, Harmison. Fall of wicket: 1-108.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Baker, Edwards, Bravo, Sammy, Pollard, Miller, Peterson.

Safina crashes out

Tennis

AFP, Miami

Serena and Venus Williams and men's world number two Roger Federer cruised into the fourth round of the WIA and ATP hardcourt tournament here on Sunday but second seed Dinara Safina crashed out.

Reigning Australian Open champion Serena Williams defeated China's Peng Shuai 7-5, 6-2 while US fifth seed Venus Williams, the reigning Wimbledon champion, beat Germany's Anna-Lena Groenefeld, 7-5, 6-3.

The sisters could meet in a semifinal at this nine million-dollar event, which saw its greatest upset yet when Australia's 42nd-ranked Samantha Stosur stunned Russian second seed Safina 6-1, 6-4.

"I'm really happy," Stosur said, "I played really well. I executed exactly what I wanted to do."

Safina could have become the women's world number one by winning the title.

"It's very disappointing.

That's what I'm playing for," Safina said. "I want to be there. Suddenly I go to the court and I don't even fight for it. It's just bad behaviour from my side. Champions, they don't do this. "It's a good punishment for me. I have to get smarter."

Swiss star Federer, a Miami champion in 2005 and 2006, advanced by beating German 28th seed Nicolas Kiefer 6-4, 6-1 to book a fourth-round match against American 15th seed Tommy Robredo 7-5, 6-3.

"It doesn't matter who's in front of me," Federer said. "I just like the thrill of winning and playing well."

Dent, the son of retired Australian tennis star Phil Dent, made a comeback in 2008 after missing more than two years with back problems, defeated Federer when both were juniors at a Wimbledon tuneup event.

"It's great to see him back," Federer said. "He was always a dangerous player because he was aggressive. It's going to be interesting to see how he plays."

Serbia's seventh seed Ana

Ivanovic, a finalist one week ago at Indian Wells, also was ousted, falling to Hungary's Agnes Szavay 6-4, 4-6, 6-1.

"I'm really disappointed," Ivanovic said. "I hardly did anything well. I couldn't really hold my serve. I had so many chances early on. I always was missing by a little bit, and got really down on myself."

Szavay, seeded 25th, will next meet 11th seed Victoria Azarenka of Belarus, who ousted Russia's Anna Chakvetadze 6-1, 6-4.

But the stunner of the day belonged to Stosur, who took her first victory over a top-10 opponent since she missed much of the 2007 and 2008 season with Lyme disease.

"It's a great feeling to beat a top-10 player again," Stosur said. "I came close a few times. Today I got over the line and I'm just really pleased. I knew I could do it. It was just a matter of when it was going to happen."

On the eve of her 25th birthday, the Brisbane native won what she called the biggest victory of her career to book a spot in the fourth round against France's Amelie Mauresmo, who beat Italy's Flavia Pennetta 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-2.

"I've been trying to get a win like this for a long time. I was happy I was able to do it and hopefully there will be more to come," Stosur said. "When I started playing well again I thought it was possible. Now I'm going to really enjoy it."

Safina plans on a break to try and recapture her hunger for the sport after what she dubbed a disaster.

"It was just a disaster match," Safina said. "She played very good, but from my side, I just can say it was sad the way I played. No excuse from my side, just basically I wasn't playing."

Russian high seeds Elena Dementieva and Svetlana Kuznetsova advanced. Dementieva, the fourth seed, defeated Spain's Carla Suarez 6-1, 6-2 while number eight Kuznetsova beat Czech Nicole Pietrangola 6-1, 6-4.

Serbian third seed Novak Djokovic defeated France's Paul-Henri Mathieu 6-4, 6-1 and US fifth seed Andy Roddick advanced by defeating Russia's Dmitry Tursunov 7-6 (11/9), 6-2.

Roddick next faces ninth seed Gael Monfils after the Frenchman beat Russia's Marat Safin 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3).



World number one Serena Williams plays a backhand against Shuai Peng of China during the third round of the Sony Ericsson Open at the Crandon Park Tennis Centre in Florida on Sunday.

Ponting looks at benefits

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting is confident that his developing team will benefit from their two Twenty20 losses in South Africa as the World Twenty20 approaches. South Africa won the second game in Centurion by 17 runs and took the series 2-0 after a similarly strong victory in the opening game at the Wanderers.

Australia handed a debut to the Queensland fast bowler Ben Laughlin in Centurion, where he took 1 for 32, and Shane Harwood improved to collect 2 for 21 having seen his figures inflate in the first match. Ponting believes the outings will help Australia formulate their squad for the world championship in England in June.

"We did a lot better tonight, particularly with the ball," Ponting told AAP. "Shane Harwood really adjusted well tonight, bowled a lot better. I thought Ben Laughlin made a really good debut."

"So to give some exposure to those guys is beneficial for

us going into a World Cup campaign. They have been two pretty poor results but at the end of the day, the bigger picture is a World Cup."

The South Africans have also taken the opportunity to look at some new faces ahead of the World Twenty20 and Roelof van der Merwe and Yusuf Abdulla made impressive debuts on Sunday. Van der Merwe was the Man of the Match for his aggressive 48 and a wicket, while Abdulla was tight in taking 1 for 16 from three overs.

"I couldn't ask for more than what happened tonight - making my debut for my country, playing on my home ground and putting in a good performance," van der Merwe said. "It hasn't sunk in yet but I'm glad with the way things turned out. Hopefully, there'll be more."

Another key performer was the stand-in captain Johan Botha, who grabbed 2 for 16 and helped tie up the Australians as they tried to chase South Africa's 156 for 5. Botha was pleased with his efforts ahead of the ODI series, which begins on Friday in Durban where Graeme Smith

is expected to return from injury to take back the captaincy.

"It went really nicely for me and for the team tonight," Botha said. "All the guys who came in did really well. They deserved a chance after their domestic performances and have given the selectors something to think about."

"I think you've just got to keep it simple, build the pressure on the batsmen. I think they got rushed in a way and then you get the opportunity to get on top of them. Batsmen like lining you up, as you know, so the key is always to keep it basic. But all the praise should be reserved for the team. I think we played really nicely in these two games."

Abbiati

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he will also miss the beginning of the next campaign.

In Dida, though, Milan have a player who was first choice goalkeeper for the rossonero for five-and-a-half seasons since joining from Corinthians of Brazil in 2002.

India salvage draw

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innings of 83 and 62, who is known as "The Wall" for his stoic performances.

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori saw only positives for the way his side turned a first Test hiding into a second encounter that his team mostly dominated.

"After the performance we had in Hamilton, to bounce back and play like we did here is very pleasing, apart from the disappointment of not winning," he said.

"The performances of Jesse Ryder, Ross Taylor (151) and Brendon McCullum (115) with the bat and backed up by a magnificent first innings bowling spell, I think the amount of pressure we put India under was fantastic."

After resuming the final day at 252-2, India only added 145 runs in the first two sessions as survival remained their priority.

Laxman and Yuvraj opened up in the final session when the result was beyond doubt and the umpires called an end to the game 70 minutes early.

Gambhir increased his overnight score by just 35 in three hours before his near chanceless innings was undone by Jeetan Patel with a ball that straightened and hit the pads

plumb in front of the wicket.

It came 12 runs after he survived the one true chance in his 436-ball innings when Iain O'Brien dropped a straightforward catch off Vettori at mid-on.

After India's rescue mission began shakily with the early dismissal of stand-in captain Virender Sehwag, Gautam shared in partnerships of 133 with Dravid, 97 with Sachin Tendulkar and 96 with Laxman.

New Zealand removed Indian talisman Tendulkar early on the final day when he was caught behind for 64 after being teased by a succession of deliveries well wide of off-stump by Chris Martin.

Tendulkar drove the fourth Martin ball to the boundary and resisted the temptation to strike again until the fifth over when he stretched out to drive and the ball edged through to wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum.

Patel was the most successful of the New Zealand bowlers with two to for 120 while Martin and Daniel Vettori had a wicket apiece.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard at the fifth and final day of the second

Test between New Zealand and India at McLean Park in Napier on Monday.

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 619-9 decl (Ryder 201, Taylor 151, McCullum 112, Vettori 55, Franklin 52; Sharma 3-95, Zaheer 3-129)

INDIA: First innings 305 (Dravid 83, Laxman 76; Martin 3-89)

INDIA: Second innings (overnight 252-2)

Table with columns: Gambhir lbw b Patel, Sehwag lbw b Patel, Dravid c How b Vettori, Tendulkar c McCullum b Martin, Laxman not out, Yuvraj not out, Extras: (b-9, lb-1, nb-3) 13. Total: (For 4 wks in 180 overs) 476. Did not bat: Karthik, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Sharma, Patel.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Martin, O'Brien, Franklin, Patel, Ryder, Vettori, Taylor, How.

Result: Match drawn. Man-of-the-match: Jesse Ryder.

SA clinch T20 series

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South Africa made four changes from the side that won the first match in Johannesburg by four wickets Friday. "The new players have shown they can play at international level and have given the selectors a nice headache," said Botha about the challenge of selecting a side for the World Twenty20 in England in June.

"Our bowling was pretty good," said Ponting. "But you need batting partnerships and that's where we fell short."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the second Twenty20 international between South Africa and Australia at Centurion Park on Sunday. SOUTH AFRICA Peterson b Hopes 34

Gibbs b Bracken 20 De Villiers c White b Laughlin 23 Duminy b Harwood 23 Van der Merwe c Haddin b Harwood 48 Morkel not out 14 Boucher not out 9 Extras: (b-1, lb-2, nb-1, w-4) 8 Total: (For 5 wks in 20 overs) 156 Did not bat: Botha, Ontong, Abdulla, Louw.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Bracken, Harwood, Laughlin, Hopes, Hussey, White.

Ferguson run out 0 White c Duminy b Botha 23 Haddin not out 16 Hopes c Morkel b Louw 18 Bracken c De Villiers b Louw 0 Harwood not out 0 Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-5) 7 Total: (For 8 wks in 20 overs) 139 Did not bat: Laughlin.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Louw, Abdulla, Morkel, Van der Merwe, Botha, Peterson.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN MY FRIEND DONATED A KIND OF COMPUTER HARDWARE CHIP, I SAID "THANKS FOR THE MEMORY!" Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals E.