



Players of Viharunissa Noon School celebrate after winning the Europa Schools Volleyball Championships girls' title defeating SFX Green Herald in the final at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

Edwards and Gayle's IPL to be short

CRICINFO, undated

Chris Gayle and Fidel Edwards will be appearing for the Kolkata Knight Riders and the Deccan Chargers respectively in this season's Indian Premier League (IPL), but will be available for a little less than two weeks.

With both West Indian players expected to arrive in England for the return series no later than May 1, their IPL stints are expected to last just 12 days.

There were concerns that West Indies' best players would not have been available for the tour, which begins with a three-day tour match against Leicestershire on April 21, after some of them signed deals to appear in the IPL. However, with the first Test scheduled at Lord's from May 6, a window has opened up for the players to turn out for their respective franchises in the tournament being played in South Africa from April 18-May 24.

One of the complaints which the players raised in their recent dispute with the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) was the ruling body's unilateral decision to stage the tour which was organised last October without their consultation and would be contested in direct conflict with the IPL.

The series was arranged bilaterally between the WICB and the ECB, following the withdrawal of Sri Lanka -- whose players demanded that they be allowed to play in the IPL.

Buchanan votes for Flower

CRICINFO, undated

John Buchanan has added his voice to the chorus of those backing Andy Flower for the England coaching position. Buchanan, who was himself approached to take on the role by the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) head-hunting firm, suggested Flower's inside knowledge of England's personnel and structures would ensure a smoother transition in an Ashes year.

"Obviously Andy Flower, who is currently doing the job and was assistant coach prior to previous coach leaving, has a good insight into how the team operates and the sort of dynamic he would like, and therefore the sort of structure and people he would like around him," Buchanan told Crinfo's Switch Hit podcast. "I guess he would have the inside running. As I've read, there seem to be some very good candidates and that's a very important thing in terms of making the final selection. But probably even more important than the right person is getting the right structure in and around the team."



Did U Know?

Andrew Flintoff recorded his best performance in the fifth and final one-day international against West Indies on Friday and became the third England player to take a hat-trick.

News agencies to boycott IPL

CRICINFO, undated

Major international news agencies would not be covering this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) because they are unhappy with the tournament's media guidelines.

They had boycotted the previous year's IPL for the same reason.

The News Media Coalition, the umbrella body that comprises global news and photograph agencies Reuters, AP, AFP and Getty Images, has failed to get the tournament's organisers to amend the conditions.

Lalit Modi, the IPL chairman, refused to change rules which barred the distribution of photographs and news to cricket-specific websites. The IPL has an exclusive agreement to supply news and photos about the Twenty20 tournament to one website.

"We can't allow the sponsor of a newsworthy event to specify where news gets distributed," Dave Tomlin, the AP's associate general counsel, said. "This is a case in which a sports association is now in the information business too and is trying to carve out an exclusive segment of the news market as its own to exploit. It's wrong."

Last year, besides agencies, news channels in India had also threatened a boycott over the constraints laid down by the IPL before agreeing to cover it after the tournament's organisers acceded to their main demands.

Ponting asks batters to lift

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting has called for greater consistency from his batsmen ahead of Thursday's crucial encounter against South Africa in Cape Town. The hosts levelled the series 1-1 in Centurion on Sunday when the visiting top-order collapsed, but Ponting has rejected the need for a player revamp.

"We don't need wholesale changes," Ponting told AAP. "We need to get those guys to play a little bit better. I'm in exactly the same boat. It's a while since I've made a hundred in one-day cricket so I've got to really knuckle down and get stuck in as well and make a big score."

Ponting fell for 8 in Sunday's seven-wicket loss as Australia were dismissed for 131 in the 41st over. "Batting in the top order in one-day cricket is all about making big scores and taking the responsibility upon yourself to do that," he said.

"Michael Clarke's had success there, Brad Haddin has been very good and I've been in the No. 3 position for a long time. We need to get a lot more consistency out of us for the remainder of this series."

He expected some changes for the series against Pakistan that follows the current contest. "Shaun Marsh and probably Andrew Symonds are going to come back in and those sorts of guys," he said.

"But we've got the squad we've got here now. It's about us playing better than we did [on Sunday]." The winner of the five-game series will take the No. 1 one-day ranking.

Nazrul Shikka

FROM PAGE 17

While replying, an opening stand of 64 between skipper Sayeed Hossain and opener Anwar Hossain took Kabi Nazrul to an impregnable position. But the winners still got a real scare when nine wickets fell in a matter of 50 runs. But, the victors finally gasped at their target of 134 with just two balls to spare.

Sayed made 34 off 84 balls that contained four boundaries while Anwar added 31 off 69 balls that saw one four and a six.

Minhaj Uddin Rubel of Railway was adjudged man-of-the-tournament and batsman-of-the-tournament with 445 runs from eight matches and Abdul Latif Ratul of Chagalniya Pilot High School, Feni became the bowler-of-the-tournament with 25 wickets from 6 matches.

Sandeep Mukherjee, head of human resources of Standard Chartered Bank, was present during the occasion as the chief guest.

A total of 464 schools from 64 districts and Dhaka Metro participated in this year's school competition which started on February 7 across the country.

BRIEF SCORE

RAILWAY HOSPITAL COLONY: 133 in 49.5 overs (Jewel 24, Abrar 13, Ibrahim 12, Arafat 10, Enamul 20 not out, extras 11; Rajon 3-24, Ashik 3-18, Shahinur 2-11)

KABI NAZRUL: 134-9 in 49.4 overs (Sayeed 34, Anwar 32, Shahinur 14, Rajon 13 not out, extras 21; Enamul 3-23, Ibrahim 2-20)

Result: Kabi Nazrul won by one wicket.

Australia favourites

Cricket

AFP, London

England do know what it is like to win the World Cup on Australian soil and they have had the measure of their oldest enemy in recent times.

Unfortunately for Andrew Strauss's side, the form of England's women's team is unlikely to be transferred to their male counterparts in time for the Ashes later this year.

The exit of champion bowlers Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne, who bowed out of Test cricket after Australia's 5-0 thrashing of England in the 2006/07 Ashes gave 'the Poms' hope as did South Africa's recent series win in Australia.

But what was overlooked, perhaps wilfully by some England fans, was how immense were the performances from the likes of J-P Duminy and Dale Steyn that secured victory for the Proteas.

The old joke that beating Australia is easy, all it needs is for someone to have the game of their life, may not be as true as it once was but England are certainly going to have to raise their game.

Australia did that by winning this year's return series in South Africa. Worse still for England, that series marked the emergence of Australia left-arm quick Mitchell Johnson as a talented all-rounder.

Defeating Australia in a Test campaign is the prize England value above all others -- and therein lies part of their problem.

England's 2-1 series triumph on home soil in 2005 -- their first Ashes triumph in nine series over Australia -- came on the back of several years of consistent success.

However, it was said that England reacted as if they'd won the series 4-1 and Australia as if they'd lost it 4-1.

For England, all other Tests began to be viewed as 'warm-ups' for the Ashes, an attitude that may have contributed to their recent series loss in the Caribbean to a West Indies side that had been in dire straits.

While Ricky Ponting remains Australia captain, England have had their off-season overshadowed by a row between Kevin Pietersen and Peter Moores which cost the South Africa-born

batsman the leadership of his adopted country and the coach his job.

Andy Flower has been put in temporary charge as England coach and now seems likely to get the job permanently if only to avoid further upheaval.

But England's biggest problem is their inability against decent opposition to take the 20 wickets needed to win a Test match.

The wayward Stephen Harmison is currently out of the side while not since 2005 has star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff taken five wickets or scored a century in a Test innings.

England have also neutered the effect of home advantage by deciding against hosting an Ashes Test at either Trent Bridge, a ground where conditions assist swing bowling, or at spin-friendly Old Trafford.

So the likes of young Australia opener Phillip Hughes may not have their techniques exposed to the swinging ball, one of the traditional challenges of playing in England, although the New South Welshman has done his best to prepare by signing an early season contract with county side Middlesex.

Specialist slow bowling, in the shape of Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar, is one area where England can claim a clear advantage over an Australia side where leg-spinner Bryce McGain was savaged by South Africa to the tune of 149 on his Test debut last month.

Injuries (England's wins in the 2005 Ashes came when McGrath was unfit), loss of form and confused selection could all yet come to England's aid.

And for all their bowling concerns, they will -- especially if Pietersen is in form -- fancy their chances of making good totals even if uncertainty, with ex-captain Michael Vaughan presently out of the team, surrounds the identity of their No. 3.

Since 2005, England have not won the first Test in any of their 14 series, losing half.

The first Test of this Ashes will be played at the new Test venue of Cardiff, where the chief executive and groundsman have both resigned ahead of the new English season.

Then again England lost the first Test of the 2005 Ashes at Lord's so a new location may do them some good.

'Fergie scared of L'pool'

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Rafael Benitez has launched another attack on Sir Alex Ferguson after claiming on Tuesday that the Manchester United manager is running scared of Liverpool.

As the race for the Premier League and Champions League enters a crucial phase, Liverpool manager Benitez accused his rival here on Tuesday of "talking too much" before adding: "I just think he is a little bit scared."

It is the second time this season that Benitez has had a dig at Ferguson, whose United side now have a one-point lead at the top of the Premier League over the Merseysiders.

Back in January, Benitez accused the United manager of playing mind games, saying

Ferguson "complained about everything".

Now, on the eve of Liverpool's Champions League quarter-final first leg tie against English rivals Chelsea at Anfield, Benitez has had another go at the veteran Scottish boss.

"He likes to talk too much about the others teams," said Benitez. "I don't play mind games. I just think he is a little bit scared."

Ferguson did his best to up the ante ahead of this tie by saying, after United's dramatic 3-2 win over Aston Villa last weekend, that whoever won the Champions League clash between Liverpool and Chelsea, who are four points off the top of the English table, would be the champions' closest challengers for their Premier League title.

"If we continue in this competition (Champions League) he might think we are

tired," Benitez told reporters at Anfield.

"But if we are not in this competition he knows we will be a threat and if Chelsea is not in the competition, Chelsea will be a threat."

"He will lose anyway," the Spaniard added.

Benitez continued: "He (Ferguson) was talking about us again. I want to clarify that it doesn't matter if we lose or Chelsea lose."

Benitez's outburst overshadowed the build-up to Liverpool's European clash with Chelsea, the team who knocked them out at the semi-final stage last season.

Dhoni thanks

FROM PAGE 17

see the way he has bowled, whether the wicket is helping him or not.

But Dhoni said the whole team deserved the credit for the long-awaited series win.

"It was a very good team effort. The batsmen and the bowlers contributed when it was needed from them."

"I think the overall effort by the bowlers was great."

He also praised the work of the lower-order batsmen, who were instrumental, particularly in Wellington where India were 204 for six in their first innings before a late rush of runs took them to 379.

"The lower-order contribution was very important because that really takes the morale of the team up, and whenever it was needed from them, the lower order really contributed."

BFE, Nokia

FROM PAGE 17

now interested to make a full deal for one year.

It was learnt that the deal was all but finalised and both parties will pen it soon.

The sponsors are showing great interest in football here after the Salahuddin-led committee's grand success in the big-spending Super Cup which was sponsored by Citycell.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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LFMM KIH LGKV C PFSHCK
GLH LEHF D Z FEMQE
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Saturday's Cryptquip: WHEN A BAD ACTOR HAS BEEN DRINKING STRAIGHT WHISKEY, PERHAPS YOU COULD CALL HIM A HAM ON RYE.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals C