



Second Division Hockey League champions Combined SC pose for photograph at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium before their yesterday's match.

PHOTO: STAR

We could've

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earlier scheduled to be held from April 10 to May 24, coinciding with the five-phase elections from April 16 to May 13 with counting of votes on May 16.

Indian cricket chief Shashank Manohar, while announcing the shift to South Africa on March 24, had said "the attitude of the government" had forced the change.

Chidambaram dismissed suggestions the change in the IPL venues was caused by an ego clash with tournament commissioner Lalit Modi.

"Where is the ego?" the minister asked. "I am too small a person compared to Mr. Modi. The point is they did not try to understand the compulsions and concerns of the police force."

"Ultimately the political buck will stop at the chief minister but the burden will have to be taken by the police. They should have understood the concerns of the police."

Asked if he had any regrets of being forced to watch the IPL on television, Chidambaram said: "I will watch it on television and will be amongst the 98 percent of the viewers who watch the IPL on television."

"Only two per cent of the viewers watch the IPL matches on the ground."

Safety has been a major worry after the attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai in November and an attack targeting the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan in March that left eight people dead and injured seven squad members.

SA take 2-1

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Fast bowler Mitchell Johnson was outstanding for Australia, taking four for 34 in his ten overs.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard of the third one-day international between South Africa and Australia at Newlands in Cape Town on Thursday:

SOUTH AFRICA: 289				
AUSTRALIA				
Haddin run out	15			
Clarke b Van der Merwe	35			
Ponting c & b Botha	20			
D Hussey c Steyn b Duminy	20			
M Hussey lbw b Van der Merwe	1			
Ferguson c De Villiers b Van der Merwe	63			
Hopes not out	63			
Johnson run out	9			
Geeves not out	10			
Extras: (b-5, lb-14, w-9)	28			
Total: (For 7 wks in 50 overs)	264			
Did not bat: Hauritz, Bracken.				
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-66, 3-80, 4-83, 5-114, 6-211, 7-225.				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	10	0	44	0
Parnell	9	0	47	0
Kallis	4	0	19	0
AMorkel	5	0	33	0
Botha	10	1	59	1
Van der Merwe	10	0	37	3
Duminy	2	0	6	1

Result: South Africa won by 25 runs and lead five-match series 2-1.
Man-of-the-match: Jacques Kallis.
Umpires: Asoka de Silva (SRI), Rudi Koertzen (RSA).
Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (SRI).
Remaining matches: April 13, Port Elizabeth; April 17, Johannesburg.



Did U Know?

The Boston Celtics have won 16 NBA championships more than any other team in the NBA.

Proteas' spin stocks up

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The next World Cup is still two years away but already South Africa are making some initial plans regarding the balance of the squad they will take to the subcontinent. In short, spin bowling will become more of a focus and the South Africans are keen to test the depth of their one-day spin stocks.

That began in Cape Town, where they bowled 22 overs of spin in their 25-run victory over Australia. Most impressive was the performance of the left-armed Roelof van der Merwe, who was playing his second ODI and took the key wickets of Michael Clarke, Michael Hussey and Callum Ferguson to finish with 3 for 37 from his ten overs.

"The team leadership have identified slow bowling looking ahead to the World Cup in Asia in 2011," South Africa's Graeme Smith said after the win. "We've got to back the spinners to do a good job. Johan [Botha] has been doing it on his own and Roelof stepped up tonight and bowled really well in his second one-day international."

Botha was a little more expensive than usual in collecting 1 for 59 from his ten overs and JP Duminy also chipped in with two overs that brought the wicket of David Hussey. Australia needed to keep the run-rate ticking over after South Africa posted 289 for 6 from their 50 overs and Smith was thrilled with the all-round effort

from his men, who now hold a 2-1 lead.

"It was a clinical performance," Smith said. "We set up the innings well and had wickets in hand for the closing overs. 'Jakes' [Kallis] and AB showed a lot of skill and 289 was way above par."

From the moment Smith won a rare toss, little went right for Australia. The 114-run third-wicket stand between Kallis and de Villiers meant South Africa were on top early and Ponting said a target of 290 was simply too great. Brett Gooch battled to 1 for 67 in his second ODI and Nathan Bracken continued his below-par tour with 1 for 58.

"Every bowling change I tried tonight, we just couldn't get that breakthrough," Ponting said. "When you have wickets in hand like they had tonight, then the guys coming on at the end of the innings are always going to go for a few more. Tonight it happened to be Bracken and Gooch more than anybody else who went for a few at the end."

Compounding the problems for Australia was an injury to Gooch, who hurt himself while batting and saw out the end of Australia's unsuccessful chase with a runner. Australia are uncertain whether Gooch will be available for the fourth ODI on Monday in Port Elizabeth, where Australia must win to keep the series alive.

"He [Gooch] has a sore foot right at the moment," Ponting said. "We don't know the extent of it yet but he's hobbling around quite a bit in the changing rooms."

Patel wants to prove himself

BBC ONLINE, undated

Nottinghamshire's Samit Patel admitted he faced some "difficult truths" after he was sent home from England's tour of the West Indies for fitness reasons.

The all-rounder has been named in England's provisional 30-man squad for the World Twenty20 tournament.

And the 24-year-old insists he has learned some important lessons.

"I have worked hard to improve my fitness and I am looking forward to playing a part in an important summer of cricket," he said.

Patel was sent home from England's tour of the Caribbean after "failing to reach acceptable standards of fitness for international cricket".

But he insisted, after being given another chance that he is now looking forward to proving himself again.

"I was desperately looking forward to pushing for a place in the side to face West Indies in the ODI series and it was a big disappointment to miss out," said Patel.

"I have had to accept some difficult truths from people in the game that I have a lot of respect for."

"I don't want to be in a position again where I miss out on selection because of a lack of fitness."

Nottinghamshire's director of cricket, Mick Newell, has backed Patel after seeing the player work hard in pre-season training.

"Samit has been pretty full-on with his fitness work and he's trained either end of the day as well as playing in our pre-season games," said Newell.

BCB directors

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The proposed tournaments include the CSDM Cup, the Twenty20 competition in Chittagong and another big-budget Twenty20 tournament planned by the board. There's widespread confusion with the players surrounding the CSDM Cup, a longer-version competition with three-day matches. The directors would also pass a decision on the budget of the Club Cup, which will have district league champions.

There could also be a resolution on a permanent CEO as Nizamuddin Sujon has been holding the post as an acting CEO for almost two years.

DIV II HOCKEY

Combined SC triumphs

SPORTS REPORTER

Combined Sporting Club became champions of the Green Delta Metropolis Second Division Hockey League beating Rayer Bazar 3-1 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

With this win, Combined have not only maintained their all-win record in tact but have also gained promotion to the First Division Hockey League.

Enayet, Raihan and Ashiqur scored one goal each for Combined while Imtiaz Hosain netted the lone goal for Rayer Bazar.

In the day's other match, Shantinagar Sporting Club notched their second win in the league crushing Uday Club 8-1 at the same venue.

Toufik struck twice while Fakhruddin, Nazmul, Selim, Monir, Tareq and Mehdi scored one goal each for the winners, who led the first half 4-1.

IPL's Cape Town crisis

PTI, Johannesburg

The IPL has run into rough weather in the run-up to its kick-off on April 18 in South Africa over a dispute involving ticket pricing and hospitality rights for members of the Western Province Cricket Club in Cape Town, venue of eight matches, including double headers on the first two days.

An urgent meeting was held recently at the offices of the Western Province Cricket Association in which senior representatives of Cricket South Africa, WPCA, IPL, WPCC club manager Gerrit Engelbrecht and club chairman Paul Burton was held to resolve the problems.

The issues related to ticket pricing and allocation for WPCC members, food and beverages within the pavilion at the Sahara Park Newlands cricket ground which hosts the matches and hospitality rights for the 14 suites on the upper level of the club's pavilion, Burton said in a message to the WPCC members posted on the club's website.

"The view of the WPCC Committee is that first and foremost the rights of WPCC and its members must be upheld. If absolutely necessary, the club will seek urgent relief from any unlawful restrictions or regulations placed on it," Burton has warned.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17
The EXIM Bank 20th National Women's Handball Championship at the Rangpur Stadium today.

On way to the final, Panchaghar crushed Rajshahi 20-9 in the first semifinal while hosts Rangpur beat Dinajpur 12-8 in the second semifinal at the same venue yesterday.

Earlier, in the day's group matches, Dinajpur beat Joypurhat 6-3, Rajshahi outclassed Nilphamari 11-5 and Tangail edged past Gaibandha 4-3.

Exim Bank Managing Director (Rangpur Branch) Osman Ali Mincha will be the chief guest in the day's final and distribute the prizes.

Wastelands

FROM PAGE 17
We need now more than ever, to learn from the past. All of us connected with the game must of necessity understand what we are asking our present generation of cricketers to do. Or where we are expecting them to reach. Some tangible goals that will make the pursuit of the elusive worthwhile. Otherwise, the game that we loved and played will only acquire a comic vitality, a vitality that paradoxically will sap our collective cricketing energies. This vitality has its own nasty edge with a rusty sharpness that will cut us down, after having come so far and if we are not careful, to mere mediocrities on the world stage.

We, who had given up the best summers of our lives for this great game, would dearly like to see our present day cricketers enjoy their seasons in the sun. Remember your roots, but grow wings too, so you can soar to reach those heights we could not. Rest assured, we will not grudge you that. There is now that value centred goal at the end of the tunnel, unlike our days. Go for it and do us proud.

(Shakil Kasem was a former national cricketer)

Moody braces for tough days

CRICINFO, undated



Kings XI Punjab coach Tom Moody believes the second edition of the IPL will be more competitive than the first while the team's captain, Yuvraj Singh, was hopeful his side could go better than the semifinals this year.

"There is no way anybody can pick one team above the other. All the sides were evenly matched," Moody said in South Africa. "All the teams in the competition are very strong. I think it would be foolish of anyone to try and predict who the favourites or second favourites will be."

Moody picked the Delhi Daredevils, who they will play on April 19 in Cape Town, as one of Punjab's biggest threats. The teams meet in Cape Town on April 19. "Delhi Daredevils is always a tough game for us. We've got them first up and they boast a good international list but also have some very good Indian stars."

Yuvraj was confident of his core base but expressed concern over the fast-bowling stakes. With new signing Jerome Taylor injured in a car accident recently and Sreesanth recovering from a back injury, Punjab have effectively lost five of their frontline players. The Australians Shaun Marsh, James Hopes and Brett Lee will be away on national duty but Punjab are hopeful they will be free for the second half of the IPL.

"We have a good team this season. We have a good batting line-up with the likes of [Kumar] Sangakkara, [Mahela] Jayawardene and Shaun Marsh. Besides, we also have Ravi Bopara this year

who can also bowl a bit," said Yuvraj. "The only worry is the pace department. A couple of pacers are coming back from injuries while Sreesanth has been ruled out. But I am confident that the rest of the squad will rise to the occasion."

Yuvraj believed the local Indian community would come out in strong support. "The Indian fan base in South Africa is huge and we are expecting them to turn up and support their city teams," said Yuvraj. "I am sure that the Punjabi community settled in South Africa will support us. Similarly, those originally from Mumbai would certainly come for Mumbai's matches. Some Indian fans will also fly down to South Africa."

While the franchise is still awaiting some key players to arrive, Moody said Punjab had been well received in Port Elizabeth. "It's of great excitement for us to have the opportunity to practice at terrific facilities here in Port Elizabeth. The ground at St George's is certainly world class, the pitches have been world class and we've enjoyed the experience to date," he said. "That's particularly so for our Indian players who need to get used to conditions here in South Africa."

Irfan Pathan, whose role as an allrounder will be more significant in the absence of Lee and Hopes, was pleased with the progress shown by the first-timers to South Africa. "There was a big difference between the first and second net practice we had here," he said. "The batsmen became more comfortable with the local fast bowlers. I'm pretty happy with their progress."

"This is my third trip here. So whatever experience I have I've already started passing on to a few Indian guys and I've seen the difference already."

PCB finds three options

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Malaysia, Ireland and Scotland have emerged as surprise contenders to host future Pakistan 'home' series.

Ijaz Butt, the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board, confirmed that those nations, along with England and the United Arab Emirates, could become the Pakistan team's foreign base while the domestic security risk remained high.

While stressing his desire for cricket to make a prompt return to Pakistan, Butt said his board would announce in the next month neutral venues for impending international series. Butt has already held discussions with Giles Clarke, chairman of the ECB, regarding the feasibility of England hosting next year's Test series between Pakistan and Australia, and will soon decide where other matches will be based.

"We have a number of alternatives before us, and we are investigating their suitability as host venues," Butt told Cricinfo.

"We have spoken with the ECB, and we will speak again with Giles Clarke when we all get together for the next ICC meeting in Dubai. There are other alternatives too. Kuala Lumpur, Ireland and Glasgow are among those. Nothing has been finalised at this stage but we will hope to make a decision in the next month."

Pakistan will return to competitive cricket this month when they play Australia in a five-match one-day series, followed by a one-off Twenty20 match, in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. They have not played since the terror attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore on March 3, and now face an uncertain future with teams unwilling to tour in the immediate future due to the security risk.

England and the UAE have previously been discussed as potential foreign bases for the Pakistan team, but Malaysia, Ireland and Scotland emerged as new contenders. In 2006, Kuala Lumpur's Kinrara Academy Oval hosted a triangular one-day series featuring India, Australia and West Indies. Ireland and Scotland, meanwhile, host

international cricket on a more regular basis, as their respective national teams attempt to ascend from the Associate ranks.

"Some have contacted us, and others we have inquired about," Butt said. "We are investigating all possibilities. We want teams back in Pakistan as soon as possible, but for now it is important that we ensure matches still progress."

Warren Deutrom, the chief executive of Cricket Ireland, confirmed he had held preliminary discussion with the PCB's chief operations officer, Salim Altaf, and was amenable to the idea of hosting Pakistan matches.

"Our aim is to heighten interest in cricket in Ireland," Deutrom said. "We are trying to build an argument that we are a sufficiently viable cricket nation to make the step up to the elite level. To be able to host Pakistan in limited overs and even Test matches could only help us in attracting more interest in the sport. We would be more than happy for Pakistan to play here."

Inzy slams PCB turnaround

FROM PAGE 17

the list and then tell them after a day that 'Look, we don't respect you'."

Asked about the ICC's move to crack down on unofficial cricket, including imposing stricter rules and a proposed cooling period for players who want to return, Inzamam accused the governing body of adopting double standards.

"The ICC is just scared that the money they generate from the game should not go to others," Inzamam said. "The ICC is bothered only about that. During the days when

there was not so much money in cricket, players used to play in tournaments which had no official status in countries like Bangladesh; the ICC had no problems. The ICC is just worried that their sponsorship money would splinter. The ICC is worried about ICL only because of the money, otherwise they know these players are only playing cricket and not committing any crime."

Reacting to reports in the Pakistani media that Younis Khan, the Pakistan captain, was keen to include ICL players in the national team, Inzamam

said it was the right way for a leader to think. "If Younis feels that with the return of ICL players, his team will get better or stronger, it's absolutely the right thought," he said. "The presence of players like Mohammed Yousuf, Nazir, Razzaq and Naved-ul Hasan will only strengthen the Pakistan team."

Pakistan's next international engagement is a five-match ODI series and a Twenty20 against Australia in Abu Dhabi from April 22-May 7.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan cricket captain Younis Khan (L) runs between the wickets during a training camp in Lahore on Friday.