

Sachin wants kids at Tests

CRICINFO, undated

Sachin Tendulkar has suggested a plan to revive interest in Test cricket, which has been dwindling especially in India where matches against Australia in Mohali and Nagpur failed to attract packed crowds, by letting children into stadiums for free.

"I started playing cricket when I was five years old," Tendulkar said at a book launch in Mumbai on Tuesday. "But the first time I watched a Test in a stadium was when I was 10. India was playing the West Indies. It is clearly ingrained in my memory and that is one experience no kid will forget. The more we invite kids to the game, the more the sport grows."

He suggested that one stand at every Test ground be kept free on weekends for school-children. "We could have the toddlers -- either in academics or in sport -- from various schools coming in to witness Test cricket. If it turns even 10% of those kids into Test cricket fans, it will be great for the game."

With the permanent addition of the IPL to the calendar, and the compulsory Twenty20 fixture per tour, boards have been forced to cut down on Tests.

Sanjay Manjrekar, the former India batsman who was also present at the event, said it was difficult for spectators to maintain interest over five days. "I think people still love to see the exciting facets of Test cricket -- four bouncers in an over or a gully and four slips -- but it is difficult to retain their interest for seven hours in a day and five whole days," Manjrekar said. "The masses will eventually decide where the game goes."

India changes tri-series schedule

AFP, Galle

India's cricket chiefs have forced a change in next month's tri-series in Sri Lanka that will leave Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men playing two gruelling back-to-back matches.

The Indians were originally scheduled to play New Zealand on September 10 and hosts Sri Lanka two days later on September 12 in the preliminary stage of the series in Colombo.

But the Indian board had the New Zealand game pushed back by a day to September 11 so that top stars are available for the entire duration of a domestic one-day tournament ending in Bangalore on September 8.

"The change has been made at the request of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)," Sri Lanka Cricket secretary Nishantha Ranatunga told AFP.

The Indian team will fly into Colombo on September 9, a day after the tri-series opens at the Premadasa stadium with a match between Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

India's matches against the Black Caps on September 11 and Sri Lanka the next day will be followed by the final on September 14.

Dhoni's team, currently enjoying a rare month-long break, will use the tri-series to warm up for the Champions Trophy in South Africa from September 22-October 5.

Tigers return

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Young all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was outstanding in terms of leading the side from the front in absence of regular skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who injured his knee on the third day of the first Test and has been ruled out of action since.

The Tigers then successfully carried on their form in their next assignment in Zimbabwe where they won the five-match ODI series 4-1. This was the third one-day series victory in a row for the Bangladesh side.

Bangladesh had a record-breaking chase in the five-match series when they overhauled the Zimbabwean total 312 in the fourth game. Also, three batsmen -- Mohammad Ashraful, Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, scored hundreds in a series, which was something unique for the Bangladesh side.

Left-handed opener Tamim was outstanding in the series as the Chittagongian not only achieved the highest individual ODI score for Bangladesh but also showed a rare consistency by making a hundred and two half centuries in five games.

BCB informed that all members of the Bangladesh cricket team and officials will pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Jamuna on Saturday at 11 am.



Sanya Richards of the United States celebrates with stars and stripes after her victory in the women's 400m final at the Athletics World Championships in Berlin on Tuesday.

Venus, Kuznetsova ousted

Tennis

AFP, Toronto

Katerina Bondarenko of Ukraine upset third-ranked Venus Williams 1-6, 7-5, 6-4 in the second round of a two million-dollar WTA hardcourt tournament here on Tuesday.

Williams, who enjoyed a first-round bye, roared to a quick victory in the opening set but by the finish had fallen to 0-3 all-time in the Canadian WTA event, the final major tuneup for many players ahead of the US Open.

"I was definitely expecting to play well and to go very far in the tournament," Williams said. "It's disappointing."

Williams was not the only seed sent packing. Australian Samantha Stosur defeated Russian sixth seed Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-4, 6-3. The Aussie will next face either France's Virginie Razzano or Italy's Flavia Pennetta.

Williams saw a silver lining in the loss, knowing she had almost two weeks to rest before the year's final Grand Slam event starts at Flushing Meadows.

"I have to take it as a positive," Williams said. "Now it'll give me a chance to rest. It has been a really busy summer for me."

Bondarenko, ranked 64th, will face either

Hungary's Agnes Szavay or Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska in the third round.

"It's big because it was against Venus," Bondarenko said. "I was playing really good. The first set, I didn't know what to do with her power. The rest of the time, I just tried to keep the ball in play."

Serbian standout Ana Ivanovic advanced to the second round by rallying to defeat Slovakia's Magdalena Rybarikova 2-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Ivanovic, the 21-year-old world number 11 still seeking her first WTA title of the year, made seven double faults but outlasted her 47th-ranked rival.

"My movement, my shots, everything was working well, but I was trying to play a little too safe," Ivanovic said. "She's a good player and she was playing really aggressive and dominant."

Ivanovic's next opponent will be Czech Lucie Safarova, who defeated Estonia's Kaia Kanepi 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

China's Zheng Jie ousted Russia's Elena Vesnina 6-3, 6-2, and could face Kim Kljesters, making a comeback after taking a two-year break to start a family, in a second-round match.

Israel's Shahar Peer took more than two and half hours but finally advanced past Romania's Monica Niculescu 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4).

Canary Wharf training resumes

SPORTS REPORTER

The football training of Canary Wharf will resume on Friday with as many as 23 budding booters taking part in the Course-III of the fourth year.

The players with their sports gear and textbooks have been asked to report to chief coach Golam Sarwar Tipu and chief coordinator Fazlur Rahman Babul at the Dhaka University ground by 5:00pm on the same day, said a press release yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Canary Wharf had started this training programme in August in 2006 by picking up 152 players (13 to 14 aged) from 45,000 footballers across the country.

Then the number of players were reduced to 23, who travelled to England last year to receive training from the David Beckham Academy and the West Ham Academy.

GM chess to begin today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 9th United Insurance Grand Masters Chess tournament starts today at the NSC Tower auditorium.

A total of 38 players including 12 Grand Masters, two International Masters and eight FIDE Masters from Czech Republic, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Ukraine and hosts Bangladesh are participating in the event.

The event will be held in 10-round Swiss-League system and a total of five thousand US dollars of prize money will be awarded to the winners.

A press conference was held yesterday regarding the tournament.

Australia report bookie approach

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Australian team management has filed a report with the ICC's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit after a player was approached by a man suspected of links to illegal bookmaking. Cricinfo has learned the approach was made in the bar of the team's London hotel, the Royal Kensington Garden, following Australia's Ashes defeat at Lord's in July.

The player alerted senior officials immediately and, following ICC protocol, team manager Steve Bernard filed a report with the ACSU. The matter is currently under investigation. The player is not suspected of wrongdoing, and has been praised by a senior ICC official for his prompt reporting of the approach in line with the ACSU's player education programme.

Sources within the ICC and the Australian team, when contacted by Cricinfo, described the approach as "concerning" and part of a worrying resurgence in the presence of illegal bookmakers around major events. Sir Paul Condon, the chairman of the ACSU, told ICC meetings in Dubai and London over the past year that Twenty20 cricket posed the greatest corruption threat to the game since the dark days of Sharjah in the 1990s; a notion supported by recent media and anecdotal reports.

Cricinfo understands the ACSU is investigating additional approaches made to players by illegal bookmakers, or conduits acting on their behalf, during the ICC World Twenty20 tournament in England earlier this summer. One source said the ACSU was "well advanced" in several lines of inquiry, at least one of which also involved approaches made to players at a team hotel.

Senior officials are concerned that illegal bookmakers, emboldened by the new betting possibilities opened up by the Twenty20 game, are becoming increasingly prevalent around match venues and team hotels. After the inception of the ACSU in 2000 -- a direct response to the match-fixing scandals involving international captains Hansie Cronje, Mohammed Azharuddin and Salim Malik -- barriers were established to block bookmakers and their intermediaries from direct contact with players. But the approach to an Australian player during an Ashes series, coupled with those allegedly made to other international cricket-

ers at the World Twenty20, have raised concerns that a new wave of corrupting influences is attempting to infiltrate the game.

"This shows that our education programme is working," an ICC spokesman told the Telegraph. "The player who was approached reported it straight away. We have the policies in place to try to ensure that we never go back to the times we were at a decade or so ago." The spokesman was also quoted by Times as saying that the ACSU "was content that all the World Twenty20 matches were clean".

A report in the Sunday Telegraph earlier this week, quoting an anonymous ICC source, warned that cricket was under renewed threat from illegal bookmakers. "Those in charge in the ICC understand that Twenty20 cricket has the danger of going back to the bad old days," the source said.

The report suggested that the apparent resurgence in contact from illegal bookmakers was in part attributable to the second IPL, a tournament at which the ACSU was not in operation, due to its 1.2-million dollar operational bill. Lalit Modi, the IPL's commissioner, told Cricinfo last month the ACSU would be involved in future IPL tournaments, and an agreement in principle has been reached for the unit to police the Champions League Twenty20, scheduled to be played in India this October. "They have expanded their services and going ahead, all the tournaments, including Champions League and the IPL would have the presence of ICC's anti-corruption unit," Modi said, in a move welcomed by the ICC's chief executive Haroon Lorgat.

Lorgat last week announced there was "absolutely no substance" to reports that Pakistan players had been approached by illegal bookmakers at their team hotel in Colombo during the recent series against Sri Lanka. The matter was investigated by the ACSU.

"The ICC and its members have a zero-tolerance approach to corruption and rightly so because the integrity of our sport with its spirit is one of its greatest assets," Lorgat said. "On that basis it is entirely appropriate that any suggestions in relation to that subject are always reported to and properly investigated by the ACSU. I am pleased those investigations have indicated nothing untoward has taken place on this occasion but it is a reminder that all of us -- players, officials and supporters -- must maintain our vigilance to ensure we remain on top of the issue of corruption."

Strauss spurs Freddie

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no lingering sense of bitterness.

"I've spoken to 'Fred' about the whole situation," Strauss told reporters at the Oval on Tuesday.

"We both know where each other stands on it -- and it's just not an issue between us."

"At this stage of a tour, maybe people try to create things out of nothing -- from in our ranks, there is not an issue there at all."

Strauss added he was encouraged by Flintoff's practice form, saying: "He got it through (in the nets) as he normally does. We're very encouraged by what we've seen so far."

"It looks very promising. He's had some good time off; the swelling has gone down; we're happy with what he's done -- things are looking pretty good."

"He's had a good rest, and we are very confident we can get a performance out of him with both bat and ball."

"He's obviously a massive player for us. We're very fortu-

nate to have a guy of that quality in our side -- especially one that tends to 'up' his performances against Australia."

"Going into a must-win game like this, I'm far more comfortable as captain seeing his name on the team sheet."

"We all want him to go out in a blaze of glory. A lot of his scripts have been written that way so far in his career, and that would be a fitting end."

However, Strauss said the match was about more than Flintoff.

"We want to win this game -- for the country, for the coaches, for all the hard work we've put in as well as him."

"So we're not solely motivated by that. We know the country are desperate for us to do well -- and I just struggle not to be very excited by what lies ahead this week."

"It's going to be a massive occasion and one, I hope, we'll treasure for the rest of our careers."

And he added that, after such a comprehensive defeat at Headingley, which led

England to drop batsman Ravi Bopara and bring in Jonathan Trott for a debut, winning the Ashes now would arguably be a greater achievement than in 2005 when Michael Vaughan's men led the series 2-1 heading to the Oval.

"It's been a very different series this time. Last time, every game was very close; this time, it's been a little bit more see-sawing," opening batsman Strauss said.

"From the situation we are in now, it will be a great achievement to turn it round and to win here this week."

Strauss, coy over whether England would field a second spinner, insisted the state of the series would not compel his side to take needless risks.

"The important thing about a Test match is you can't win it on day one," he said. "You've got to earn the right to win it -- and that means by playing good, solid cricket for the first three days."

"It's not a case of particularly forcing the pace; it's about wresting the initiative away."

Richards, Idowu

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see him being beaten, injury and a shocking loss of form permitting.

American Tyson Gay, the defending triple world sprint champion, is not competing in the 200m and in his absence veteran Shawn Crawford and Wallace Spearmon spearhead the United States' charge.

Crawford, the 2004 Olympic 200m champion, made no mistake by also progressing to the semifinals, winning his quarter with ease in 20.37sec.

Later in the day, his compatriot Kerron Clement retained his men's 400 metres hurdles by timing a world best for the year of 47.91seconds.

The 24-year-old -- silver medalist at the Olympics -- beat Puerto Rico's Javier Culson, who clocked 48.09sec, while 2005 world champion Bershawn Jackson of the United States took bronze in 48.23sec.

Clement dominated throughout and rounding the bend he was totally in command while Jackson, whose training was hampered by a hamstring injury this season, had to settle for the bronze.

There was delight for the

home crowd at Berlin's Olympic Stadium when Steffi Nerius of Germany won the women's javelin gold to end her frustrating run of three successive world bronzes.

The 37-year-old threw a season's best mark of 67.30 metres to beat defending and Olympic champion Barbora Spotakova of the Czech Republic (66.42m) while Maria Abakumova of Russia took the bronze (66.06m).

Nerius, who took Olympic silver in 2004 and bronze from the 2003, 2005 and 2007 world championships, set her marker out from the start with what turned out to be the winning effort.

Kenyan Ezekiel Kemboi ended a six-year wait for world gold when he won the men's 3000m steeplechase title here on Tuesday to add to his Olympic title from the 2004 Athens Games.

In his fourth world championships, during which he has won three steeplechase silvers, Kemboi finished in a championship record of 8min 00.43sec, with compatriot Richard Mateelong producing a personal best to claim silver at 0.46sec.

BASKETBALL Indian Army prevail

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army went down 61-48 against India Army in an exhibition basketball match at 6 Independent Air Defence Artillery Brigade Basketball Court in Mirpur Cantonment yesterday.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarti witnessed the friendly match as chief guest and gave away trophies among the winners.

Visiting Indian Army Basketball team, who also had earlier played two games against Bangladesh Navy and 6 Independent ADA Brigade Basketball team, are expected to leave here on August 22.

Div 1 football

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Chandirchar Udiyan Sangha (CUC) and Sonali Atit drew goalless in the opening match of the Hajful Islam Khan Uttu Smriti First Division Football League at Shahid Miraj-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj yesterday.

A total of 14 teams are taking part in the league. Local lawmaker Jahid Malek Swapan inaugurated the meet.

Asif getting in shape

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif seems to be on course for a return to the international fold ahead of the Champions Trophy. The PCB has asked Asif, 26, to report for a coaching camp for young players to gauge his fitness for the tournament, to be held in South Africa, as he completes a 12-month ban for a doping offence.

"Asif is attending the training camp for under-23 players in Karachi where we have asked camp commandant Rashid Latif to give us a report by August 20 whether he is match fit for the Champions Trophy," chief selector Iqbal Qasim told Reuters.

Qasim was satisfied with Asif's progress after he took 1 for 23 in the nine overs during a match at the PCB Under-23 Emerging Players camp at the National Stadium in Karachi. The performance would have done his chances of inclusion in the Champions Trophy squad no harm.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SHOWY GARDEN BLOOMS ARE FATIGUED AND NEED SOME REST, DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY USE FLOWER BEDS? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals I