

It's staying in Windies

CRICINFO, undated

The ICC has quelled speculation that the 2010 ICC World Twenty20 could be moved away from West Indies by announcing that the tournament will be officially launched in Barbados on October 31.

Earlier this week a newspaper report suggested the ICC were considering shifting the tournament due to the ongoing contractual dispute in the Caribbean which has led to West Indies fielding a second string outfit during recent matches, including the ICC Champions Trophy.

Now, though, the ICC has said that Haroon Lorgat, the chief executive, will launch the event at the end of the month and tickets will go on sale the following day.

The news was announced after the ICC chief executives' committee (CEC) meeting in Johannesburg which has had two days of discussions over various issues.

The CEC also worked on developing a draft of the next Future Tours Programme (FTP) since the current one ends in May 2012. A working draft of the same will be presented to the next board meeting.

The CEC also appointed Justin Vaughan, New Zealand Cricket chief executive, to the ICC Cricket Committee while Nishantha Ranatunga was appointed to serve on the ICC Development Committee.

The ICC board is due to meet in Johannesburg on October 6 and 7.

Carlo's 1st

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The plays appear to be working. Lampard, so free scoring for so much of his career at Stamford Bridge, has been relatively innocuous this term, having failed to score in open play in any competition, and Chelsea have instead been largely reliant on the exceptional Didier Drogba, who already has six strikes to his name.

Anelotti, however, insists a solitary training session - the one witnessed by Abramovich, conveniently enough - was enough to iron out any difficulties.

"I saw the game against Apol and found something that we didn't do well, and we worked to improve that," he said.

"I think we will play better on Sunday. We have done our jobs until now but now we have a big game against a good team."

Liverpool are not without their own difficulties, having slumped to a surprise defeat at Fiorentina in midweek in what Rafael Benitez, the manager, described as one of the worst displays of his Anfield tenure.

With the Merseysiders having already been beaten twice in the Premier League, another set-back at Chelsea would be costly, although Benitez insists nothing will be decided on Sunday.

"Both teams will be desperate to win and hopefully it will be a good game," he said.

"We go there with the idea we can win. We beat them twice last year, but we know Stamford Bridge is a difficult place to go. Both teams will try to win."

"If we can do that it will be two defeats in a row for them, but my idea is still the same. It will be a long race."

Criticism fires

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"He's fully concentrated on the game and he knows how to prepare for the game. I've been to pre-match talks and I've never heard anything like it in my life. He wants you to go out and destroy the opposition."

"I don't sing with him though. He sings only opera stuff and that's not my thing."

Berbatov is settling into life in Manchester and admits he has enjoyed getting used to being a home player at Old Trafford.

The Bulgarian has experienced being a visitor to United's home ground and now enjoys picking up on the tension in away players.

He said: "Every team that faces us is going on to the pitch with all the respect they have for us and sometimes they are a little afraid."

"That's especially at Old Trafford but that's normal because we're the best team in the world."

"You can see it, honestly and I know that because when I was at Tottenham you would come here and you were against United, the best team, and some of the best players."

"I know that now when opposition come to Old Trafford, they're a bit scared, they have respect, and we try to take advantage of that in the first minutes of games."



Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova holds the champion's plate after winning the final against Jelena Jankovic of Serbia in the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday.

Pan Pacific Maria's

AFP, Tokyo

Crowd favourite Maria Sharapova captured her first title since her injury lay-off by beating Jelena Jankovic to win the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament on Saturday.

The 22-year-old Russian, who returned to action in May after a right shoulder injury, won the battle between the former world number ones to regain the title she won in 2005, when the Serbian seventh seed retired with an arm injury at 5-2.

"It was very tough because Jelena started off so strong. It was my second final of the year, so I was a little bit nervous," said Sharapova.

"I wanted to perform really well. I feel like I played good enough tennis to give her a go today and I just wanted to keep fighting out there."

Sharapova found herself 0-40 down in the opening game, which she lost two points later, hitting a backhand drop shot wide.

She then went 0-2 down before moving into top gear, hitting an array of power-packed strokes and aggressive service returns to take the following four games in a row.

Jankovic, who needed court-side treatment to her right arm in the semifinals on Friday, took a medical time-out for the same injury at the beginning of the eighth game.

But Jankovic abandoned the match when

she went down love-30.

"It started yesterday during the match I guess because the roof was closed and it's very humid in there. The ball got really heavy. I started to feel pain in my shoulder, then it was going down to my wrist," said Jankovic.

She said her wrist was now swollen and she had no power to hold the racket.

"I don't know what happened there. But it is a new injury, started yesterday. I tried my best... but I would just get weaker and weaker and there was more and more pain. Unfortunately, I had to stop. I couldn't finish it."

"Hopefully, I will recover for the (China Open) tournament in Beijing, which is really important for me. But we will see," added Jankovic.

Meanwhile, Sharapova said: "It's never easy to win a match like this. Obviously, it's very important for Jelena to be healthy and we want to compete at 100 per cent."

"It's very difficult for her to perform at her best right now. We have gotten a lot of injuries. This is towards the end of the year. I wish Jelena a speedy recovery," she added.

Sharapova's fifth win against Jankovic in seven meetings earned her the 350,000-dollar top prize.

For Sharapova, who claimed her first career WTA singles and doubles titles at the 2003 Japan Open on the same court, it was her first title since Amelia Island in April 2008, and 20th overall, four of them in Tokyo.

GP Zim series sponsors Hosts avoid

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Grameenphone, also the sponsors of the national cricket team, will in addition give another 14,000 dollars for the prizes. However, half of the amount will be spent for the man-of-the-match and man-of-the-series awards in the five-match one-day international series.

Axiom earned the rights of the Package One and the Package Two which include perimeter boards, mid-wall, western side fence, etc., at an offer of 81179 dollars.

"When we want to sponsor something we do that passionately and this time there was no shortage of passion and ultimately we won the rights," said Kazi Monirul Kabir, chief of communications of Grameenphone Ltd.

"Grameenphone and BCB have come a long way together and we want to continue it as well as widen and deepen the relation in the days ahead," Kabir said. "Grameenphone is currently involved with the cricket academy and different development activities and the company is eager to expand its involvement with cricket."

Jalal Younus, the chairman of the media committee,

informed the press that they were trying to stage a number of matches of the ODI series under lights as the floodlights had been reset at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Mainul visits

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Hockey Stadium, Kabaddi ground, under-construction handball ground, NSC gymnasium were among the venues he visited. Chairman of the Training and Development Committee of Bangladesh Olympic Association Mizanur Rahman Manu and Anisur Rahman Dipu were accompanied him.

Bangladesh A

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hapless batting in the Bangladesh A batters as they couldn't build up any resistance and collapsed to 81 in 29 overs. The highest of the innings was 17, which came from the bat of former opener of the national side Hannan Sarker. Another former national star Rajin Saleh managed 13. The day's play was shortened due to bad light and rain.

Asian Football Confederation vice-president Manilal Fernando, actress Shomi Kaiser, models Nobel and Bindhu, former Bangladesh captains Jewel Rana and Rajani Kanta Barman, Maldives football president Ali Azim participated in the draw proceedings.

Besides, the executive committee members of the Bangladesh Football Federation led by Kazi Salahuddin were among others present in the draw ceremony.

Indo-Pak still

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bent on maintaining our winning streak," he said. "Who does not want to beat the World Champions."

Younus said the way his players fought to defend a low total despite the Australians getting a good start showed how keen they were to win the match.

"For us it didn't matter that the result could put India out of the competition. We didn't think about it. We were more focused on doing well against Australia."

You can't afford yourself to be diverted while playing a strong side like Australia," he added.

Carnival starts in Rio

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many things in my life and thought I could never get emotional but suddenly I'm crying more than any other person."

Their enthusiasm was matched by Brazilians back home, with most expressing pride over the city's selection and hope the Games would bring much-needed investment and development.

"I'm very happy. I hope that the Olympics will bring development and economic growth as well as (improve) security and transportation," said 20-year-old Daniel, a credit analyst.

Brazil's economy was expected to grow between four percent and six per cent next year as it helps push Latin America out of recession, according to a recent report by the International Monetary

Fund. Ricardo Chaves, a 47-year-old accountant, noted echoed hopes "for security and transportation to improve in the city, because the daily life of the Carioca is very difficult."

Rio is known for chaotic traffic, an overwhelmed public transportation system and a high crime rate -- 6,000 people were murdered in 2008.

The challenges the city must overcome to be ready for the Games are not insignificant, but Mayor Eduardo Paes said the bid was "realistic."

Transportation issues are expected to be among the most pressing for the city to address, with many of the Olympic sites around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the Olympic village.

More than a third of the Rio budget for the Games will be

devoted to improving the transportation system, which has been neglected in the years since Rio lost its title as capital to Brasilia in 1960.

"This is a great opportunity for Rio," said musician Cintia Lobato. "The city is impoverished and it needs the Games, which could spur development if they are well managed."

An official study estimated that the Games could generate 56 million dollars and two million jobs by 2027.

Some naysayers have pointed out that the city benefited little by hosting the Pan-American Games in 2007, but most were simply overwhelmed by the moment.

"Who wins? We do, my children do, my grandchildren do!" said Saul Trindade, 43, who joined the dancing masses to celebrate the win.

Anlene Nat'l Tennis 2009

SPORTS REPORTER

Anlene National Tennis Tournament 2009 was inaugurated yesterday at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna, said a press release from Bangladesh Tennis Federation. Mohammad Zahid Hassan Russel, MP and president of the parliamentary standing committee for youth and sports ministry, inaugurated the week-long tournament which is being sponsored by the New Zealand Dairy Products Bangladesh Limited. SA Mallick FCA, managing director of New Zealand Dairy Products Bangladesh Limited, was the special guest at the event. A total of 218 contestants are taking part in the tournament under the banners of different clubs and organisations. The matches of the tournament will start from tomorrow at 9:00 am.

Ponting eyes Tendulkar record

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting, after becoming the third batsman to cross 12,000 runs in one-day cricket, has said he is chasing milestones set by Sachin Tendulkar. Ponting chalked up his 28th ODI century, an unbeaten 111 from 115 balls, to help Australia demolish England and march into the ICC Champions Trophy final.

Ponting paid tribute to Tendulkar, the leading run-scorer in ODIs and Tests. "The number of innings of his I have been able to sit back and watch, I think he is an amazing player," he said. "Look at his stats and records and it's quite incredible for someone to have stayed in the game for 20 years. He has set benchmarks for guys like me to chase him and get as close as we can. If I had to last 20 years, I would probably be batting in a wheelchair."

Ponting received a round of applause in Centurion as he pulled Graham Onions for four to deep square leg, and then raised his bat to acknowledge the crowd and his teammates. He sits at third behind Tendulkar and Sanath Jayasuriya in the list of all-time ODI run-getters. Ponting is the only Australian with over 10,000 runs and has an enormous buffer over the next of his countrymen on the list -- Adam Gilchrist is second with 9619 runs.

Kiwis polish

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He started with a slip, almost got Yusuf lbw in his first over, and then prised out his opposite number in his second. In the 25th over, Umar Akmal looked to counterattack, hitting back-to-back fours off Vettori, the first boundary hit since the 14th over.

Tapu takes

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the tournament, two minutes before the long whistle to shatter the Chittagong Mohammedan's dream of playing in the knockout phase.

Venus advances in China

AFP, Beijing

Venus Williams dug deep to advance to the second round of the China Open on Saturday in Beijing, where she won Olympic doubles gold with sister Serena last year.

Williams, the world number three and third seed here, came onto centre court at the Olympic Tennis Centre with all guns blazing, but then had to battle back in the second set to defeat Russia's Vera Dushevina, 6-2, 7-6 (7/1).

The 29-year-old American, sporting a hot pink mini-dress from her Eleven fashion line, dictated play on the first night of main draw matches -- for better and for worse.

She punished Dushevina in the first set with heavy ground-strokes and big serves, breaking her twice for the easy early lead.

The seven-time Grand Slam winner then lost her concentration in the second set, quickly falling behind to the 23-year-old Russian 0-4 on a series of mis-hits and double faults.

Williams stormed back, reeling off five straight games including three service breaks to get to 5-4. But again she faltered, allowing the set to go to a tiebreak before closing it out.

"It got away from me. I started making a few too many errors out there," Williams told reporters after the match.

"I was still just focused on winning the set, and focusing on not giving too much more away," she added. "I was just confident that if I kept getting games, I'd make her uncomfortable and make her start thinking about it."

The WTA and ATP -- identifying China as a key strategic marketplace -- have upgraded the tournament here to be a cornerstone of the two tours, meaning that many of the sport's biggest names are in town.

On Sunday, top seed Dinara Safina will face

Italy's Roberta Vinci in the first round, while second seed Serena Williams will take on Estonia's Kaia Kanepi.

Maria Sharapova, who won the Pan Pacific Open in Japan on Saturday, has a first round bye in the 4.5-million-dollar event.

In other first round action here on Saturday, French teen Alize Cornet upset Australian 15th seed Samantha Stosur in three tough sets, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.

The 19-year-old Cornet, ranked 51st in the world, broke Stosur in the 10th game to take the first set 6-4, but the 25-year-old Australian veteran, the world number 15, battled back in the second to even the match at one set all.

Cornet did not fold under the pressure, making just nine unforced errors throughout the match to Stosur's 23 and sealing the victory 6-3 in the third.

Italy's Flavia Pennetta, the 10th seed, fought back an early challenge from Chinese wild card entrant Han Xinyun to win in straight sets, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2.

The pair traded service breaks several times in the first set to bring it to a tiebreaker, during which the Italian used her experience to best advantage, taking some of the pace off and forcing a forehand error to win the set.

Pennetta, a US Open quarter-finalist, took charge of the match when she broke Han for a 3-2 lead in the second set and never looked back, closing out the match with an overhead smash.

Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova beat Austrian Sybille Bammer, 7-5, 6-1, and Canadian Aleksandra Wozniak rallied to defeat France's Aravane Rezai in three sets, 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/5).

Serbia's Ana Ivanovic, the 11th seed, withdrew from the tournament, citing illness.

The men's main draw gets under way on Monday, with Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Roddick leading the charge.

Wenger never satisfied

AFP, London

Arsene Wenger admits he is never satisfied with his own performance as he tries to restore Arsenal to the summit of English and European football.

Wenger became the longest-serving manager in Arsenal's history on Thursday when his tenure in north London stretched to 13 years.

After winning three league titles and four FA Cups, the Frenchman's reign has already ensured he will be remembered as one of the greatest managers to grace the English game.

But despite building a team that went unbeaten through the 2003-04 league campaign, the perfectionist in Wenger means he is never completely happy with his work.

He has had more reason than ever to question himself over the last few seasons as Arsenal's run without a trophy has now reached four years.

"I question myself every day. I try to assess my performance with what I do," Wenger said. I ask 'How I can be better? How can I improve? How can I get this team to achieve what I believe is in the team?'"

"I have not exceeded my expectations because I always expect much more."

"My expectation is to win every single football game I manage and I did not do that, so I can never exceed my expectations. There are still more targets to achieve."

"I believe we have consistently managed to

be at the top level, within our resources and improving our structures."

"The club is on a new platform and to reach many more targets."

"I believe our structures - new stadium, new training ground, a very young team, a healthy financial situation, we play at the top - means we have all the basics to be successful."

"But of course we want to win trophies because we have worked very hard with this team to be where we are."

"It is down now to us to win the Premier League, the Champions League - those are our targets."

A European trophy remains the only thing missing from Wenger's Arsenal CV - having taken the club to the Champions League final in 2006 and to the semi-finals last season before being outplayed by Manchester United.

Wenger, whose side host Blackburn on Sunday, added: "We were close to being crowned, but that is what is still to achieve."

"Of course it drives me on, but the competition is very high with all the big clubs you have in Europe."

"Our overall performance in the games this season has been quite good, very promising."

"Even when we had little disappointment in two games, the quality of the performance was still there."

"We did transform that disappointment into more desire and came back every time."

"I believe the spirit is there, the quality is there and we know it is a very big and important season for us. I am confident we will do well."

Vettel takes Suzuka pole

INTERNET, undated



Sebastian Vettel may be on the verge of bowing out of the Formula One title race, but continues to do all he can to keep himself in the mix, taking his fourth pole position of the year with fastest time in Japan.

The German was the class of qualifying, topping each of the three sessions, but again had to wait for another red flag interruption to pass before claiming the pole, after Heikki Kovalainen went off at Degner before posting a time.

Kimi Raikkonen was again the first to post a

flying lap, but the Finn was no match for Vettel, who bided his time before venturing out, and then slashed the benchmark time by almost a second.

Similarly, no-one had an answer for Vettel after the Red Bull car had reset the target, with Jarno Trulli cementing second on the grid for Toyota nearly half a second adrift.

After that, the best anyone could manage was third, with Nick Heidfeld and Adrian Sutil both occupying the position before Lewis Hamilton made it his with a late run. The Briton will line up alongside friend and rival Sutil for the second time in three races, while title contender Rubens Barrichello claimed a top five slot with his sole flier.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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