



PHOTO: STAR

EVEN STEVENS: Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (R) and his Zimbabwe counterpart Elton Chigumbura posing with the Micromax Trophy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Sunday.

Kochi gets IPL nod

AFP, Mumbai

The Indian Premier League (IPL) on Sunday cleared the new Kochi franchise to take part in the lucrative Twenty20 cricket tournament from next year, ending a long dispute over the team's ownership structure.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which owns the IPL, had delayed its decision on Kochi's fate three times after demanding its owners resolve a shareholding disagreement.

"The Kochi Franchisee has satisfactorily responded to the notice issued to them by the BCCI," BCCI secretary N Srinivasan said in a press release after a meeting of the IPL governing council in Mumbai.

"It has been decided that the franchise Kochi Cricket Pvt. Ltd will play in the IPL from 2011 onwards."

The inclusion of Kochi means at least eight teams will compete in the fourth edition of the IPL, which is set to start on April 8 next year.

Player auctions are scheduled for January 8-9.

The Kochi franchise was bought by the little-known Rendezvous Sports World group for 333 million dollars at an auction in March to add two new teams to the tournament.

The dispute arose after some stakeholders failed to agree on a 26 per cent free share being given to the Gaikwad family, who had led the successful bid.

The Sahara Pune franchise is the other new entrant in the multi-million dollar event.

Two other franchises -- Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab -- have been thrown out for similar ownership issues as the BCCI acted to clean up the event. Both teams are fighting legal battles to be allowed back in.

The IPL is looking to make a fresh start after its founder Lalit Modi was sacked in September following allegations of corruption, indiscipline and money-laundering, all of which he denies.

Siddikur sixth

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Baek Seuk-hyun of Korea by two shots with an overall score of 111-under-par 277.

Karlberg bagged a paycheck of 198,125 US dollars while Siddikur's earning from the event is 37,775 US dollars.

Siddikur will take part in the Jonnie Walker Cambodian Open from December 9 to 12 and Black Mountain Masters in Thailand from December 16 to 19 in a quest to cap off a memorable year.

Rubcic wants

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team for the AFC Challenge Cup in March until they show significant improvement in the upcoming Bangladesh League.

Supporting the notion of the coach, Roy said that they would have nothing to say if the axe fell on the illustrious players, as the coach has the absolute right to do that.

The coach also stated that his charges could hardly follow his instruction during the Asiaad matches against Uzbekistan, United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong because he was given very little time to prepare the boys.

"Rubcic explained that he had picked the Asiaad squad from a given list and that was not his real squad. He also got little time to prepare his squad and we acknowledged his claim," said Roy.

KP tightens the noose

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and Reg Foster as English double-centurions in Australia.

Pietersen dominated the third day as he helped himself to his second Test double-century and was within reach of his highest Test score of 226 against the West Indies in May 2007.

In doing so Pietersen broke through for his first Test century in 28 innings since his 102 against the West Indies at Port-of-Spain in March last year.

Pietersen was in virtuoso form, clubbing 31 fours and jumping down the wicket to launch a six off the hapless spinner Xavier Doherty in his chanceless knock.

"It's wonderful to get runs, and it's wonderful to put the team in a position where we can win a Test match in Australia," he said.

"I really do believe we are in a really strong position in this game and to get the team into a position like this and to get the wear into their bowlers again and for a couple of us to go and enjoy ourselves was great."

Four years ago Pietersen scored 158 and Collingwood 206 in a record stand of 310 in England's first innings 551 for six declared -- the tourists were coincidentally on the same total Sunday against a despairing home attack.

Cook's occupation of the crease earlier ended on 148 in the 97th over when he inside edged paceman Ryan Harris to wicketkeeper Brad Haddin.

The Adelaide crowd rose to their feet to cheer Cook from the field after his 15th Test century and third against Australia.

Cook has now scored 450 runs in the series for two dismissals at an extraordinary average of 225.

The Essex left-hander has now occupied the crease for almost 22-and-a-half hours and

faced 865 balls in the series.

Collingwood was the other England wicket to fall on Sunday when he was trapped in front lbw by Shane Watson for 42 ending a 101-run stand with Pietersen.

Dominant England have now amassed 1,068 runs in their last two innings of the series for the loss of just five wickets.

Australia, drained by their second day in the field, looked bereft of ideas to contain England's remorseless run chase with skipper Ricky Ponting attempting to dry up the scoring with some unorthodox field placements.

Watson said Australia's batsmen would have to be at the top of their game to save the Test.

"We are way behind in the game, there's no doubt about that," he said. "And we've only got ourselves to blame. So far we have been totally outplayed."

It was painful exposure to Test cricket for left-arm spinner Doherty, who went wicketless for 120 off his 24 overs in his second Test match, while Doug Bollinger proved expensive at 1-121 off 27 overs.

Opener Simon Katich left the field during the second session with a heel problem, after he hobbled around the field in obvious discomfort.

The home side were paying dearly for the abject failure of their batsmen in a below par 245 after winning the toss on Friday's opening day.

It was Australia's worst performance in the first innings at Adelaide since being skittled by the West Indies for 213 in 1993.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 245 (Hussey 93, Haddin 56, Watson 51; Anderson 4-51, Swann 2-70, Broad 1-39)

ENGLAND: First innings 551 for 4 (Cook 148, Pietersen 213, Trott 78, Collingwood 42, Bell 41 not out; Harris 2-84, Watson 1-44)

Barca, Real dominant

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games, we wanted to compete as best as we could and coming in on one day was not the best way to do that."

Guardiola fielded the same starting XI that crushed Real 5-0 in Monday night's Clasico and the visitors turned in a polished display despite the difficult circumstances.

With 25 minutes gone the goal arrived with Messi feeding a pin-point pass to World Cup winner Pedro who arrived on cue to dispatch a fine finish into the corner.

Barcelona were not as slick in the second half but got the second goal they wanted on 64 minutes when Villa fed Messi who sprinted away from his marker before sliding in a neat finish.

Eight minutes from time Messi was fouled in the penalty area and the Argentine picked himself up to convert the spot-kick for his 15th goal of the season.

Ronaldo stays one goal ahead of Messi in the goalscoring charts after scoring both goals in the victory over Valencia.

Argentine forward Gonzalo Higuain was out injured and Mourinho opted for Ronaldo, who shrugged off an ankle injury, as a lone striker leaving French forward Karim Benzema on the substitutes bench.

Ronaldo hit the post on the stroke of half-time and went close in the second half but got his reward on 72 minutes slotting in the opener with Valencia reeling from the dismissal of Albelda eight minutes earlier for a second booking.

Portuguese star Ronaldo scored a super second with several step overs and a thumping drive into the corner on 86 minutes to wrap up the game.

In other matches, Atletico Madrid's poor form continued with a 2-0 loss at Levante.

It was a third successive loss for Atletico, the Europa League holders, following 3-2 home defeats by Espanyol and Greek side Aris Salonika and the club now lie in seventh place.

Inzy mesmerises

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washed out, a match they would certainly have lost having been bowled out for 74 by England. They walked away with one point, enough to set them clear of Australia who had a superior net run rate. They did, however, have momentum on their side having won three matches on the trot coming into the semifinals.

Martin Crowe, the New Zealand captain and the form batsman of the tournament, won the toss and elected to bat. The Kiwis got off to a reasonable start, reaching 39 before the second wicket fell when John Wright popped a catch to Rameez Raja off leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed.

In walked the captain, and played a blazing innings, putting the strong Pakistani attack to the sword. He struck seven fours and three sixes in his sparkling 83-ball 91 before being run out. By that time the score had reached 221 for six, and the slog was on. Ian Smith came in and smashed the bowling to take the total to 262 at the end of fifty overs.

Pakistan started cautiously and took a long time to get moving. Imran Khan coming in at number three played too slowly, but had nonetheless given his team a base by building half-century partnerships with Rameez Raja and Javed Miandad. He was third out with the score at 134, but his 93-ball 44 left his team needing to score at a reckless pace, and against the form team and under the pressure of a World Cup semifinal, a Pakistan win seemed unlikely. And when Salim Malik left six runs later, it seemed

impossible. The equation stood at a colossal 123 from fifteen overs at 8.2 runs/over.

This was a decade before the advent of the breathless Twenty20, and scoring at such pace was unheard of.

Pakistani fans could still hope, because out on the pitch there was still the die-hard street-fighter Javed Miandad and he had been known to play miraculous innings before. But on that day at Eden Gardens, the great man just needed to pick the singles. Because the young man at the other end, the hitherto unknown gentle giant Inzamam-ul-Haq, was batting like a man possessed.

Martin Crowe, the captain, was sitting in the dressing room because of a pulled hamstring, while stand-in captain John Wright was reduced to a mere spectator. Inzamam would shuffle to the off side and put away anything on the legs to the midwicket boundary. When the bowlers reacted by bowling outside off, he unleashed slashing cuts to send a white blur to either side of the man at deep point.

In his ten-over association with Javed Miandad, the pair put on 87, and Inzamam scored 60 off 37 before being run out; a theme of his later years. There was still 35 to be scored from five overs, but the tide had turned irreversibly. Miandad stayed till the end with an unbeaten 57 off 69 balls, providing the security for Moin Khan to go berserk with an 11-ball 20. Pakistan won with one over to spare, leaving the New Zealanders crushed after yet another valiant Cup performance.

Series ends in more rain

CRICINFO, Pallekele

The stadium at Pallekele could have scarcely had a worse debut. After five hours of incessant rain on the final day, play was finally called off without a ball being bowled -- the second completely washed-out day during the match.

On the three days that play was possible, only 103 overs were bowled, in which West Indies made 303 for 8 after having been put in to bat by Kumar Sangakkara.

The entire series, which ends in a nil-all stalemate after rain in all three Tests, has been an incredibly disappointing one for fans, players and broadcasters alike. The tour hasn't had a full day's play since the first day of the first Test in Galle, but there have been several individual performances shining out through this depressing excuse for a Test series.

Chris Gayle's fantastic triple-ton helped West Indies dominate the first Test, while Kumar Sangakkara's 150 in Colombo gave Sri Lanka control in the second. Darren Bravo announced himself with three mature half-centuries, which were not only impressive given their context, but aesthetically pleasing as well and Ajantha Mendis showed signs of a return to form through a succession of testing spells.

The teams can't claim to have gained much from the series and will hope that the late monsoon rains will abate in time for the one-dayers, the first of which is on Thursday.

Bhutan women

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also includes favourites India and rank outsiders Bhutan who will play in the other match of the day.

The Group A champions will meet runners-up of Group B in the first semifinal on December 20 while the other two semifinalists will fight for a final's berth the next day. The final will be held on the 23rd. All the matches will be held in the afternoon at the Cox's Bazar Stadium.

All eight members of the South Asian Football Federation have put forward their teams for the first-ever tournament under the SAFF banner, even though only five nations -- India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka took part in the SA Games earlier this year.

Training

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some 36 coaches from Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan, Bhutan, Myanmar and Korea Republic are taking part.

NSF vice president Kutubuddin Aksir inaugurated the course while BSF general secretary AN Istiaque Ahmed was present.

Dad Siddons

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A board official also confirmed the news. He also said that he (Siddons) might return during the Zimbabwe series if the baby and mother are stable.

"The board were supportive of me when I informed them," Siddons said.

Siddons's wife had only left the capital on Saturday.

Test C'ship in 2013?

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is eyeing June 2013 for the inaugural Test World Championship and will use current rankings to decide the four playoff spots, CEO Haroon Lorgat told Australian radio on Sunday.

Test cricket, which has struggled to maintain its profile since the advent of Twenty20, currently has a rankings system but no tournament to determine the top Test nation.

The ICC has proposed a quadrennial tournament with the four best-performing nations to meet in semifinals before playing off for the world title in a bid to boost flagging interest in the longest form of the sport.

"I think the first possible opportunity for us to have a playoff is in 2013 which means that the current rankings table would need to be used," Lorgat said.

"For example, right now Australia would be struggling to qualify for the playoffs. But there may be another scenario with somebody else would also be in the frame depending on this result they might slip in."

Lorgat was speaking on the sidelines of the third day of the second Ashes Test between Australia, ranked fifth in the current Test standings, and fourth-placed England.

"Going forward we're looking at a league table that would be worked on points and for match winnings," Lorgat said, but details on how to treat draws, which occur regularly in Test cricket, were yet to be decided.

"One option is whichever is the highest ranked team would progress through. There's

the possibility of the timeless test, you've got to get to a result," he added.

Lorgat also confirmed the 2015 one-day international World Cup to be held in Australia and New Zealand would be stripped from 14 teams to 10, while the biennial Twenty20 World Cup tournament would be expanded from 12 to 16.

Sri Lanka will host the next Twenty20 World Cup in 2012.

"In my view [the Twenty20 World Cup] is a better vehicle to develop the game, a better vehicle to promote the game, whereas the World Cup should be the flagship event, should be the best teams in the world," he said.

International tournaments have been overshadowed by suspicions of match-fixing by players in recent years and the ICC will rule on charges of alleged breaches of its anti-corruption code by Pakistan test players Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer in Doha in January.

The trio were provisionally suspended after newspaper allegations that they had arranged for deliberate no-balls to be delivered in the fourth test against England in August.

Lorgat said the Jan. 6-11 hearing would be the final say on the allegations, and the players would have no recourse to appeal, barring lodging their case with the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Despite the allegations initially angering the Pakistan Cricket Board and its controversial head Ijaz Butt, cricket authorities there had become the first nation to implement an anti-corruption code for their domestic set-up, Lorgat said.

"We've done a lot of good work, Ijaz Butt himself is now involved with us," he said.

"So now if there was a gap in the domestic environment, hopefully we've closed that."

DAVIS CUP FINAL AGAINST FRANCE Serbia level 2-2

Tennis

AFP, Belgrade

Local hero Novak Djokovic put Serbia in line for their maiden Davis Cup crown Sunday with a crushing 6-2, 6-2, 6-4 defeat of Gael Monfils which pulled the hosts level 2-2 with France.

French hopes of a 10th crown now rest with Michael Llodra, who will line up against Viktor Troicki in the fifth and final rubber.

Serbia were left on the ropes after Llodra and Arnaud Clement handed France a

stunning comeback victory in the doubles on Saturday after being led two sets to nil.

However, Djokovic helped redress the balance with a commanding display of tennis which seemed to leave Monfils, who won his opening rubber Friday against Tipsarevic, frozen out of the game.

"It's one of the best matches of my career, in the circumstances," said Djokovic.

"I have a lot of respect for the French team, especially Gael, who is a good friend. Now, I'm hoping Serbia can go on and take the victory."

Djokovic set the bar high

from the outset with a service game which had the Frenchman struggling and gave the world number three his first 14 points of the match.

In the first set, Djokovic broke Monfils twice as he surged to a quick 6-2 win.

Monfils was soon in panic mode, and seemed only a pale shadow of the player who swept Tipsarevic aside on Friday.

The Frenchman battled back bravely in the second set, trying on several occasions to upset his opponent's plans with brief forays to the net.

But while that strategy worked on occasion, Djokovic somehow managed to restore his preferred strategy of unleashing thunderous shots from the baseline, a game in which he was ultimately superior.

The Serb broke Monfils again in the sixth game of the second set, and then in the final game, spreading his arms in mock triumph towards the increasingly vociferous partisan crowd as he surged to a 2-0 lead.

To his credit, Monfils upped his game in the third set, the world number 12 breaking Djokovic twice -- only to cancel that advantage by losing his own service game due to a series of unforced errors.

Djokovic eventually secured the win to register his sixth defeat of Monfils in as many meetings.

"I'm very disappointed, I expected to play a lot better," Monfils told France 3 television.

"I gave it everything I had. After talking to Guy (Forget, team captain) I tried to change tactics a few times because Novak was so strong."

"He was by far the better player today."

He added: "Mika (Llodra), is feeling great. He's recovered well (from Saturday's doubles) and he's used to playing in singles."

"I know he will give it everything he has."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Jokes
5 Adipose tissue
8 Fleet from far off?
12 Burn remedy
13 Unfriendly
14 Ferris wheel, e.g.
15 Heart of the matter
16 Agt.
17 Boast
18 In
20 Not us
22 A handful
23 Wrong (Pref.)
24 "Carmina Burana" composer
27 Kinship
32 Mai (cocktail)
33 Mainlander's memento
34 Sticky stuff
35 Off-mimicked Michael Jackson video

DOWN

1 Pop singer
2 Came to earth
3 "Gee!"
4 Ignite
5 Intruder-blocking software
6 Expert
7 Glitch in print
8 Street child
9 Aries, Leo or Sagittarius
10 Bloodhound's clue
11 Does some mending
19 Yours truly
21 Acronym to an over-sharer
24 Coopers-ton's Mel
25 "Go, team!"
26 Stravinsky ballet, with "The"
28 Lawyer's due
29 Hydrant
30 Also
31 Thither
36 Van Gogh subjects
37 Allow
38 Majestic
41 Bell or Kettle
42 Hearty
43 Stratford river
44 Auction
46 Norway's capital
47 Profound
48 Tosses in
51 Journal

Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE HORSE CARETAKER HAD SO MUCH TO DO LATELY, I GUESS YOU MIGHT SAY HE WAS SADDLED WITH WORK.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals H