



PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh footballers go through a practice session at the Nepal Police Sports Ground in Kathmandu yesterday. They take on Nepal in the first of two exhibition matches tomorrow.

No one is a favourite

AFP, Colombo

The World Twenty20 explodes into action this week in tropical Sri Lanka with no runaway favourite and upsets likely in cricket's shortest and least predictable form.

At least half of the 12 participating nations will consider themselves strong contenders to lift the trophy in Colombo on October 7, with the others hopeful of living up to the event's reputation for shocks.

From defending champions England, the powerful West Indies and formidable South Africa to Asia's top three -- former winners India and Pakistan, and Sri Lanka -- the field is strong and deep.

The others won't be taken lightly either, if a string of sensational results in the tournament's three previous editions are any indication.

While many purists are unconvinced by Twenty20, and fear the impact on Test cricket, there's no doubting its entertainment value.

India, initially reluctant to embrace the newest format, won the inaugural event in South Africa in 2007 under rookie skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni after senior pros Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly opted out.

It was in the same tournament that Zimbabwe stunned Australia, Bangladesh upset the West Indies, and India brushed aside England, South Africa, Australia and Pakistan in successive games to grab the title.

Pakistan won the second edition in

England in 2009, a tournament that made a stunning start when the Netherlands, a non Test-playing nation, upset the hosts by four wickets in front of a packed house at Lord's.

England claimed the 2010 title in the Caribbean, but it was Australia's amazing win over Pakistan in the semifinal that remained the talking point.

With 34 needed from the final two overs, Michael Hussey smashed 38 off 10 balls to take Australia home with one delivery to spare.

Only last week, Australia trounced Pakistan by 94 runs to avenge two successive defeats against the same opponents.

"It's the sort of format where nothing can be taken for granted," said India's Dhoni. "We have seen one ball change the whole game. The idea is to do well for all the 40 overs. That is all that matters."

The 12 sides have been divided into four pools for the preliminary league, with the top two from each advancing to the Super Eights round.

If the seedings go to plan, fans can expect high-voltage action in the Super Eights -- a week-long race to the one-off semis and final in the Sri Lankan capital.

England, the West Indies, Sri Lanka and New Zealand are seeded to meet in group one of the Super Eights, with the top two teams making it to the semifinals.

Group two is already being billed as the "Group of Death", with arch-rivals India and Pakistan seeded to face Australia and South Africa.

Sri Lanka's frontline batsman

Kumar Sangakkara cautioned rivals not to expect spin-friendly pitches at the three venues in Colombo, steamy hill town Palallekele and Hambantota, site of a major new port.

"Be ready for a stiff breeze in Hambantota, swing and seam in Palallekele and a good batting surface at the Premadasa (stadium) in Colombo," the veteran batsman-wicketkeeper said.

"Each venue will have a different challenge and sides will have to adjust accordingly. It will make the tournament more exciting."

England are out to prove they can defend the title without star batsman Kevin Pietersen, the man of the tournament in 2010 who has been axed from the national team on disciplinary grounds.

The West Indies are touted as potential champions, with explosive batsmen in Chris Gayle, Kieron Pollard and Marlon Samuels, and a wily spinner in Sunil Narine.

The men to watch out for are plenty. Australian spinner Brad Hogg, aged 41, and South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis, 37 next month, will look to rubish the theory that Twenty20 is a young man's game.

Ace Indian all-rounder Yuvraj Singh is assured of a warm welcome from the stands, having battled cancer earlier this year to return to the big stage.

Also vying for the spotlight will be prolific Pakistani spinner Saeed Ajmal, dashing Australian opener David Warner, local boy Lasith Malinga, England's Jonny Bairstow and South African Richard Levi.

Lara dedicates it to father

The West Indian legend inducted into Hall of Fame

Cricket

CRICINFO, Colombo

Brian Lara, who was inducted into the International Cricket Council's Hall of Fame at the Awards ceremony in Colombo on Friday evening, dedicated the honour to his late father Bunty Lara, who died before his son played a Test.

Lara also credited his brother Winston and sister Agnes during the function at the Water's Edge Resort, saying they'd played important roles in his development as a cricketer.

"This person you see today before you accepting this Hall of Fame honour is someone he [Bunty Lara] moulded. He ensured that I had everything I needed to succeed as a cricketer and in life, even in trying times," Lara said. "He made a special effort to make sure everything was there."

"I had to work hard ... but I knew I had strong support. My biggest pain was that he did not see me play a Test match, but having the West Indies team in Trinidad at his funeral was a special tribute to the man who made sure I was given the tools to play this glorious game and make such a lasting contribution."

Lara ended his 17-year international career as Test cricket's leading run-scorer, with 11,953 runs at an average of

52.88 in 131 matches, a record that has been beaten since. However, he still holds the record for the highest individual score -- 400 against England in Antigua in 2004. He had held it before as well, when he scored 375, also against England in Antigua in 1994, to go past Garry Sobers's 365. He also holds the record for the highest first-class score: 501 not out for Warwickshire against Durham in 1994.

In the 299 ODIs that he played, Lara scored 10,405 runs at an average of 40.48. In 2004, when captaining West Indies, he led the team to victory in the Champions Trophy against England at The Oval.

"As a boy, you never really thought of Hall of Fames, you never really thought of records. Growing up in the '70s my heroes were Clive Lloyd, Viv Richards and Roy Fredericks as a left-hand batsman. I am happy I was able to spend 17 years in the West Indies and was able to contribute in a way worthy of this honour," Lara said. "It is nice to share it with my family."

"Tonight I had my brother and my sister here with me. Agnes is the one who took me to my first coaching clinic when I was six, and Winston was a role model as a stylish right-handed batsman ... so to have them here is very special."

Lara said his most memorable series was the four home Tests against Australia in 1999, when he scored 213 in

Jamaica and 153 in Barbados to help West Indies draw the rubber 2-2.

"The 213 against Australia in Jamaica is definitely my best innings," he said. "You have to understand the climate at that time. Going into that match, landing in Jamaica and knowing that everything was on the line -- your captaincy, the series, respect and adoration by your fans. The mental strength I mustered during that week was something that when I looked back, it was very hard to measure anything against that."

"The performance was something I cherish and the fact that we won the match to level the series, after we were bowled out for 51 the week before in Trinidad, felt great. I thought the way I handled it was special. It is something I will never ever forget ... it's a day's cricket I will be talking about for a very long time. The 153 in Barbados the following week was rated higher by Wisden and the cricketing gurus but the double century in Jamaica was my best effort."

Lara, 43, joined 16 West Indian cricketers -- Lance Gibbs, Gordon Greenidge, George Headley, Michael Holding, Rohan Kanhai, Clive Lloyd, Malcolm Marshall, Viv Richards, Andy Roberts, Garfield Sobers, Clyde Walcott, Everton Weekes, Frank Worrell, Courtney Walsh, Joel Garner and Curtly Ambrose -- in the ICC Hall of Fame.

Spain reach Davis Cup final

AFP, Gijon

Spain reached their fourth Davis Cup final in five years after David Ferrer gave them a 3-1 semifinal victory over the United States by beating John Isner 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 on Sunday.

Unfazed by the absence of injured Rafael Nadal, Spain will travel to Argentina or the Czech Republic for the final, depending on which country prevails in the other semifinal due to be decided on Sunday in Buenos Aires.

WIHP ride

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time. While Lesporis's innings was cut short three short of a century when he became Apu's second wicket, Hope remained unbeaten on 146 at the close. The home side struck towards the end of the day with the wicket of Yannic Cariah for a two-ball duck.

The host's slow-left arm attack -- Shaker Ahmed and Nazmul Islam Apu -- shared four of the five wickets to fall between them.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES HP: 394 for 5 in 90 overs (Hope 146 not out, Fletcher 105, Lesporis 97; Nazmul Islam Apu 2-71, Shaker Ahmed 2-77).

Hants do a double

Cricket

AFP, London

Hampshire completed a domestic one-day double with a dramatic last ball win over Warwickshire in English cricket's 40-over final at Lord's on Saturday.

Already this season's Twenty20 champions, Hampshire kept their cool to beat Warwickshire on fewer wickets lost with the scores tied.

Hampshire captain Jimmy Adams made 66, former Zimbabwean international Sean Ervine 57 and former Australia batsman Simon Katich an unbeaten 35.

Warwickshire, the four-day county champions, looked to be making a successful chase thanks to Ian Bell's 81.

But the England batsman's dismissal sparked something of a Hampshire revival.

Even so Warwickshire's

Neil Carter, playing his final match before retirement, levelled the scores off the penultimate ball with a four.

But he failed to get a bat on Kabir Ali's final delivery, with wicket-keeper Michael Bates completing a fine take standing up to the stumps, as a Hampshire attack missing star spinner Danny Briggs and the injured Dimitri Mascarenhas just did enough to see the south coast county to victory.

"It's just brilliant," Adams said. "You dare to have a think about what it might be like but I wouldn't have scripted it like that."

"You dream of playing in Lord's finals but I never dreamed of captaining a side and walking out with the boys behind me."

Not just

FROM PAGE 16
more than just a 'basher' of the ball. "As far as I am concerned my job is to play according to the state of the game and not going all out from the word go. I will obviously look for ways to score boundaries if the situation requires me to but sensible batting is always the key," he said.

"I don't consider myself to be a T20 specialist; I have opened the innings in first-class cricket a number of times. But I do like to play my strokes and I plan to use this approach in the tournament," added Zia.

Election culls

FROM PAGE 16
Morshed at his office yesterday.

"I have raised the matter of organising the summer meet during Saturday's executive meeting but most of the members showed their unwillingness to hold the championship this time," said Morshed adding that the Summer Championship might take place after the election.

However, federation treasurer Mizanur Rahman said that it would not be possible to hold the Summer Championship in November or December, since both are traditionally considered winter months.

Commissioner

FROM PAGE 16
Divisional Sports Association, Dhaka Divisional administrator, District Parisad and Bangladesh Football Federation.

DDFA president and former national footballer Imtiaz Sultan Jonny informed that they would try to hold this tournament before the start of Bangladesh Premier League in an effort to ensure participation of star players from respective districts.

Walton will provide Tk 3 lakh out of an estimated budget of Tk 10.2 lakh.

TT players

FROM PAGE 16
The ad-hoc committee came into power in January and since then they held only one tournament in nine months. They also have not sent the national team to World Championship in Germany and Asian Championship in Macau citing financial limitations.

Div-I hockey

FROM PAGE 16
Shishu Kishore Sangha outplayed Victoria SC 3-0, with a brace from Mohammad Hridoy and one from Sabbir Hossain Bappi.

Kiwis issue a warning

ANI, Colombo



ICC WORLD TWENTY20 SRI LANKA 2012

New Zealand will this coming week enter their fourth ICC T20 World Cup in Sri Lanka with little real previous success, but will still hope to pull off a surprise or two in the tournament.

According to explosive batsman and wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum, the Black Caps are determined to make a mark and redress their poor record.

They have made just one semifinal, in 2009, and built a seven win-nine loss record in the tournament so far.

The team looks promising on paper, with opener McCullum sitting atop the world international T20 batting rankings and Martin Gupthill placed fifth.

The team's bowling stocks look strong, too -- with Kyle Mills, Tim Southee and Nathan McCullum in decent form.

Round robin play will pit the Black Caps

against Bangladesh (on Friday) and Pakistan (Sunday), and they need at least one victory to ensure passage through to the Super Eight pool round.

Being tactically "proactive" in their warm-up games against Australia, who they played in Colombo last night, and South Africa, will lay a good base for the team, stuff-co.nz quoted McCullum, as saying.

"The teams we're playing in the competition are going to be a lot different to the two warm-up games against Australia and South Africa," he added.

"But I still think, whilst it would be nice to try different combinations and try a few of your tactical elements in those games, I still think it's about being able to be proactively mixed in your tactics and stay in front of the opposition," he, however, said.

New Zealand has beaten Bangladesh in the shortest form of the game in Hamilton in February 2010 and Pakistan thrice. But it has lost to Pakistan on five occasions.

Appetiser in the form of India

FROM PAGE 16

zeal as he had left it a year ago following the critical illness.

While Suresh Raina would also look to spend some more time on the crease, Dhoni showed why he is still rated as one of the great finishers of the game against Sri Lanka the other day.

But against Pakistan on Monday, the Indian skipper needs to be much more focused both with the bat and with his leadership skills.

Of late, Rohit Sharma has been erratic with bat which might prompt Dhoni to give Manoj Tiwary a chance ahead of their campaign opener.

The Indian bowlers led by Irfan Pathan, however, looked in good stead in the previous match and they just need to continue their positive run against Pakistan.

Pathan continued his fine run and scalped five wickets to guide India to a comfortable 26-run victory over Sri Lanka in the first practice match on Saturday.

The only concern for Dhoni would be lack of wickets in pace spearhead Zaheer Khan's kitty. But comeback man Harbhajan Singh looked composed against the hosts and bowled a tight line, which definitely is encouraging for the team.

Pakistan, on the other hand have been a bit inconsistent in the run-up to the sporting extravaganza. They won two successive T20 matches against Australia, but their 94-run loss to the Kangaroos in the final T20 tie showed that their batsmen are vulnerable to quality bowling.

Pakistan's batting line-up exhibits immatu-

rity at this level, but with the likes of Abdul Razzaq, Shahid Afridi and skipper Mohammed Hafiz in the ranks they really have the necessary fire power to upset any side.

Young Nasir Jamshed has shown tremendous promise with the bat and the game against India would certainly test his temperament.

On the bowling front, Pakistan has a much settled line-up with off-spinner Saeed Ajmal and speedster Umar Gul leading their respective departments.

The experience of Razzaq and Afridi with the ball gives Hafiz plenty of options to dismantle any batting side.

With both the teams having tasted success at the big stage -- India winning the inaugural World T20 in 2007 and Pakistan lifting the trophy two years later -- an exciting battle awaits cricket loving fans of both the countries.

TEAMS
INDIA (from): Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Ravichandran Ashwin, Lakshminarayanan Balaji, Piyush Chawla, Ashok Dinda, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Virat Kohli, Irfan Pathan, Suresh Raina, Virender Sehwag, Rohit Sharma, Manoj Tiwary, Yuvraj Singh.
PAKISTAN (from): Mohammad Hafeez (captain), Abdul Razzaq, Asad Shafiq, Imran Nazir, Kamran Akmal, Mohammad Sami, Nasir Jamshed, Raza Hasan, Saeed Ajmal, Shahid Afridi, Shoaib Malik, Sohail Tanvir, Umar Akmal, Umar Gul, Yasir Arafat.

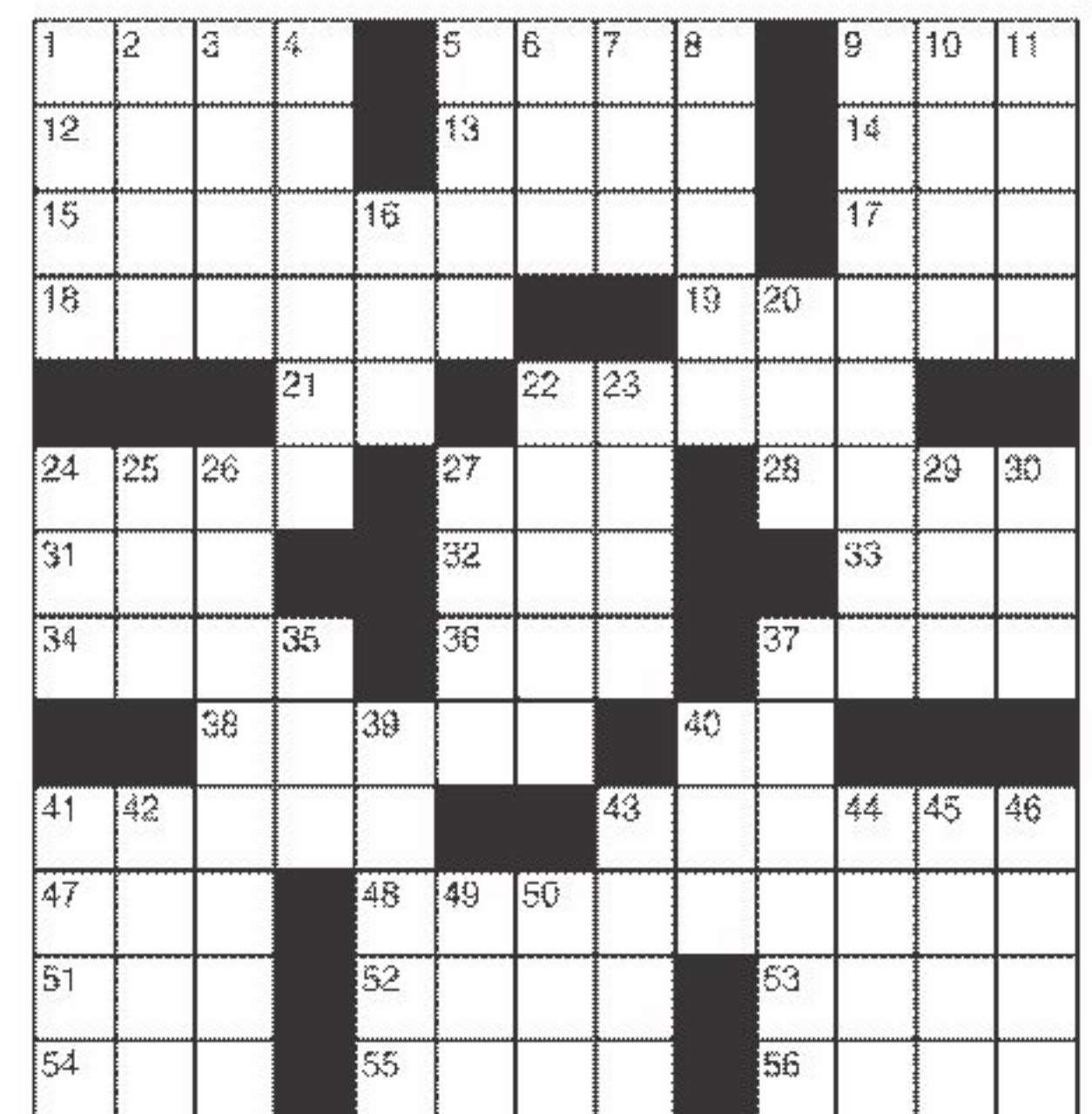
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 36 Doctrine 56 Lip 23 Couple, in a gossip column 24 School org. 25 Piercing tool 26 Crashed Frisbee? 27 Greet 29 Historic period 30 Parched 35 Tibetan bovine 37 Olympic Frisbee? 39 Transfer 40 "Gosh!" 41 Stay away from 42 Sit for a shot 43 Stage presentation 44 Italian volcano 45 "Bill & — Excellent Adventure" 46 Fusses 49 Tramcar load 50 Tiller or Ullmann

DOWN 1 Curved paths 2 Continue 3 Portrayal 4 Blazing 5 Mimic 6 Switch positions 7 Expert 8 Sill 9 Apprehended 10 Merriment 11 Mid-month date 16 Alias abbr. 20 \$ dispenser 22 Prize money

Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHENEVER I SKETCH A ROUGH DRAWING OF TV'S HERMAN OR LILY, FOLKS SAY I'VE CREATED A MUNSTER.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals Y