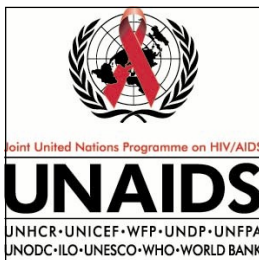


INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

P2
Exciting developments in Taranto
Finland continue to develop
Inaugural ice Ashes in Estonia!

P3
Belgium's Tsunami Appeal Effort
Ireland look to impress at World Cup
Italy in Malaysia

P4
O'Brien goes back to basics
Northern Ireland Cricket Academy visits Cape Town



COMING NEXT MONTH:

Ireland at the Women's World Cup
Paul Baldwin: An Umpire's view from Malaysia
ECC Centre of Excellence
Dennis Stones in Paris

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GREECE ARE INDOOR CHAMPIONS

Greece took the ECC European Indoor Championship title for the second time in Herning, Denmark over the weekend of 12-13 February. Greek captain George Stogiannos, who played in the last Championship victory in 2001, was delighted for his country who will now have the opportunity to further develop the game in Greece. Greece, having scored only 93-3 in their 10 over innings, looked in trouble against holders Denmark, who seemed favourites to win at home, however the result was decided on the very last ball. Denmark needing four runs for victory could only manage one from the last two balls and Greece were crowned champions in a thrilling end. Portugal took 3rd place followed by France, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Player of the Tournament was Arun Ayyavooraju of France and the MCC Spirit of Cricket Fairplay Award was awarded to Luxembourg by MCC Secretary & Chief Executive Roger Knight. All

Photos by Barry Chambers

players and officials at the Championship wore the red Aids awareness ribbons.

Full details and scorecards, including photos, video clips and audio interviews can be found on the ECC website.



Greek Captain George Stogiannos



Arun Ayyavooraju



Roger Knight presents the Trophy



Portugal batting



Umpires with Aids awareness ribbons

ICC REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

Congratulations to Europe's winners in the regional awards. They are as follows:

Best Overall Cricket Development Program – Scotland (Stanley Morrison Trust 'Adopt a Primary School Scheme')
Flicx Junior Cricket Initiative – Switzerland (Patrick Henderson's youth cricket development programme)

Best Women's Cricket Initiative – Scotland (Lloyds TSB Women's International Cricket Festival)

Best Cricket Promotional Program – Scotland (Lloyds TSB Scotland, Sponsor)

Best Spirit of Cricket Initiative – Ireland (Muslim School Initiative)

Photo of the Year – Isle of Man (Simon Watson 'Batting on Top of the World')

UNAIDS Award – Belgium (UNAIDS/Tsunami Fund Raising Event)

Volunteer of the Year – Finland (Andrew Armitage)

Lifetime Service Award – Spain (Ken Sainsbury)

These category winners will now go forward to select a global winner from the 5 regional nominations in each category. These winners will be announced on 31st March.

ICC European Development Manager Richard Holdsworth commented "The programmes and initiatives being run throughout the 24 member countries in Europe are aston-

ishing. They really capture the imagination and passion of the game of cricket whilst recognising the unique values the game has. The development of the game has continued to increase and standards are improving in all areas. Much of this is down to the invaluable contribution of the hundreds of volunteers involved in the game. The awards go some way to recognising some of these people".

Photo of the Year: Simon Watson 'Batting on Top of the World'



EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS IN TARANTO

Simone Gambino (President FCrl) took time out of a hectic pre-Malaysia schedule to meet ECC Coach Richard O'Sullivan in the fast developing region of Taranto in the heel of Italy.

Officials from the Città2Mari Polisportiva and Messapia CC met with Simone and Richard to discuss developments in their fast growing school program.

Since Richard's two visits in 2004 the local coaches have built upon their original activities to create a regular program of activities in four local primary schools and two media schools with introductions being given

in other schools interested in the program.

This all ties in magnificently with the Comitato Promozione e Sviluppo (The FCrl Development Group) who after a meeting Richard attended in Bologna in January have a motion tabled to further build on their existing regional coaching plan to begin small clusters of primary school activity leading to Kwik Cricket Tournaments and representation in the national U13 competition.

Taranto is being used in 2005 as a pilot for the scheme and on the evidence so far they and hopefully the rest of Italy can

build a sustainable structure so that cricket can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Cricket session with Taranto Coaches



Introductory Session at Poste School

FINLAND CONTINUE TO DEVELOP

Two years after Stuart Barnes' last visit to Finland, he was given the opportunity to catch up with how things have developed in that time and maybe make a small impact on what may happen in the future. As with every visit, they kept him busy.

After taking part in a club training session soon after his arrival, Stuart met with some key coaches to plan the following day which was to see the first ever Finnish National Youth squad assemble and participate in a coaching session, and then travel north of Helsinki to introduce cricket to the National Conference for PE teachers.

A youth squad representing Finland will be taking part in the ECC Indoor Championships in 2006 and after going through some admin the players were able to show off their skills. It was clear that all the players had been coached well and with more squad sessions planned they have a good chance of further improvement before the tournament.

The PE teacher's conference potentially had the biggest impact so far in grass roots development in the country. Feedback was positive and they were impressed with the simplicity of what they saw. A good number of them will now go

back to their respective schools armed with kwik cricket sets.

Stuart's last day included some quality time with the senior national squad. Mainly focusing on team dynamics and the little things that can make a big impact on performance, this group of cricketers face some big challenges later this year. The MCC will be touring Finland during the summer and this tour will provide good competition before Finland go on to take part in their first ECC European Affiliates Championship in Belgium.

Cricket in Finland is in good hands.



Ice cricket in action

INAUGURAL ICE ASHES IN ESTONIA!

Four teams from the UK joined together with two Estonian teams to compete in the first ever Ice Cricket Tournament held in the stunning Estonian capital, Tallinn.

In a closely fought final, St Albans based Kelletino Warriors defeated a team from Cambridge University to win the Inaugural Ice Ashes. The bails were incinerated and presented to the Champions in a silver trophy.

Being purists, the 6-a-side tournament was uniquely played on ice without the assistance of matting. Using a composite "indoor" cricket ball, wooden bats, pads and spring back stumps, the tournament was

played fast and furiously by all teams, regularly developing and adapting their techniques and strategy to handle the ice.

Due to the late arrival of the "Big Freeze" this year, the event was switched at the last minute from the Olympic Marina (Tallinn was the setting for yachting and sailing in the 1980 Moscow Olympics) to a former Soviet missile factory, subsequently converted into an Ice Hall.

Over the weekend teams also took advantage of the local facilities, enjoying Snowmobiling, Rally Karting, Saunas, Ice Skating, the beauty of Tallinn's medieval streets and its legendary nightlife.

The Tournament was organised by Harpenden based Baltic Adventures and the Estonian Cricket Association.

Due to demand, a second tournament is being held in March.

The ice pitch



Champions Kelletino Warriors



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BELGIUM'S TSUNAMI APPEAL EFFORT

Belgium's 12-hours of indoor cricket to raise funds for victims of the Boxing Day Tsunami moved smoothly through Saturday 5th February with inter-club matches, junior games, two internationals against a strong France side and 90 minutes of celebrity cricket featuring 16 of the country's leading actors and actresses.

A major aim had been to incur zero costs so that every cent raised went to Tsunami 12-12, Belgium's umbrella relief organization. This was achieved through the exceptional generosity of every organization involved – from the local Edegem council, to the Red Cross, to AAR Sound & Light who supplied the sound systems and a large number of people who donated time and material free.

Highlights of the day's cricket included two Belgium-France

matches – with France winning the first and Belgium the second. An unexpected moment came late in the day when the country's youngest club, the four-month old Ghent Arcadians CC, beat Royal Brussels, the country's oldest club at 145 years and last year's League Champions. The guys from Ghent managed to nab the scorecard, and by Sunday afternoon there were rumours that Charles Bloomaert, Ghent's chairman, had already had it framed.

Robert Sian, an Antwerp club player and an actor, who arranged the attendance of the 16 actors and actresses, got the celebrity event underway with a quick briefing about how to play the game, followed by a warm-up. Then they started playing for real... with a television crew, radio reporter and newspaper photographers

roaming the floor filming, recording and interviewing. The effort our guests put in was huge, with many even launching themselves into full-out bowling with successful results. The celebrities all wore red Aids Awareness ribbons, as did the Belgium team.

It was pleasing to note coverage by two television stations and a three-minute report on national radio together with newspaper coverage about the event came afterwards.

Cricket Belgium thanks all 16 celebrities who put in so much effort and, according to Robert, thoroughly enjoyed their cricket!



TV personality
Andrea Croonenberghs



Leah Thijs, leading actress from
the 'Thuis' series

IRELAND LOOK TO IMPRESS AT WORLD CUP

We are very pleased to announce that Emma Beamish of the Irish Women's squad will be writing a series of diaries for ECC from the Women's Cricket World Cup in South Africa. These will appear on a regular basis on the ECC Website and the first diary, covering the squad's preparations, can now be found on the home page.

Emma has been a part of the Irish Women's squad for 2 years and has represented Ireland in the ECC European Women's Under 21 Championships, where she was Player of the Tournament in 2004. A full playing member of the MCC, Emma has lived in England for the last 7 years and has just

finished a degree in English Literature from Exeter University. She has also played for Surrey and Shepperton Cricket Club. Emma has recently returned from playing club cricket in Sydney which she classes as an amazing experience.

Ireland are the only Associate member country competing in the World Cup, which starts on 22nd March, and they qualified after being unbeaten in Holland in 2003. The squad departs for Pretoria on 11th March for a training camp at the High Performance Centre. Ireland's progress can be followed in full on the ECC website.



Squad training



Emma in action

ITALY IN MALAYSIA—WCQS DIVISION 2

Sadly Italy were unable to translate their preparation into results in the WCQS Division 2 in Malaysia, with Captain/Coach Joe Scuderi crucially injuring a finger in the first match.

Following a keenly fought contest and some good individual performances, Italy finished 7th in the tournament, which takes

them to 29th place in the ICC World One Day Rankings.

The WCQS Division 2 Final took place between PNG and Fiji with PNG winning by 30 runs. PNG now secure the 12th and final place at the ICC Trophy in Ireland in July 2005, the top 5 sides from which will qualify for the ICC World Cup in West Indies in 2007.

Full details and scorecards can be found via the ECC website.



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Cricket in the Langa township



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O'BRIEN GOES BACK TO BASICS

While his county colleague at Kent CCC, Geraint Jones was busily preparing to travel to Zimbabwe and South Africa, the other Kent wicketkeeper, Niall O'Brien of Ireland, was travelling in a different direction. Niall went back to his roots, spending a well deserved break at home with his family in Sandymount, Dublin.

However, it was not all rest for Niall as his time in Dublin allowed him to renew acquaintances with National Coach, Adi Birrell and members of the Irish Squad preparing for the ICC Trophy in July.

Home Club, Railway Union were not slow to spot an opportunity and very shortly after arriving back in Dublin, sister Ciara, the Irish Hockey International, had Niall assisting every Monday with coaching hockey with the boys from Willow Park in Blackrock. After hockey each Monday, it was a quick dash to St. Conleth's College in Ballsbridge where Niall conducted a Winter Cricket Coaching Programme for the U11 and U13 players from Railway Union.

The Programme was successfully run over eight weeks on

Monday and Wednesday nights at both St. Conleth's College and Roslyn Park in Sandymount and over forty players from the Club participated. Assistance was given from Kenny Carroll, 1st X1 captain at the Club for 2005. The Programme was modelled on the same lines as the LCU Winter Programme for younger under-age players, with a strong emphasis on skill development as being a key component in the developing of sound cricketers for the future. Basic bowling, batting and fielding skills were tutored and practised time and time again over the eight week period. Mastering basic skills at a young age will set the foundation for future success and enjoyment within the sport for these players. Each session finished with the obligatory 'game' with Niall and Kenny also getting involved.

Niall teamed up with LCU Development Officer Brian O'Rourke to run four days of coaching clinics during the school holidays. The boys U12's and U14's squads were engaged in two days of intensive coaching while sessions were also held for the girls U13,

U15 and U17's squads with over 20 girls involved in each group. Over the four days the 'middle' session comprised of Niall working with a large number of young wicketkeepers who were put through their paces with a variety of innovative practice and training routines.

Niall returned to Kent in early January to meet up with new Director of Cricket, Graham Ford and prepare for the challenging season ahead. Young players back in Dublin will be looking to follow Niall's season with interest by various means, while he himself will no doubt be interested to find out if all the time and effort spent during the wet nights from October to Christmas will pay dividends during 2005.



NORTHERN IRELAND CRICKET ACADEMY

After four successful years of operation the Northern Ireland Cricket Academy will fly to Cape Town at Easter to play six matches against local teams and also to participate in coaching in the Langa township.

Greg Thompson who gained his first senior cap in the ICC Inter-continental match against Holland last season will captain the tour party who are aged between fourteen and seventeen.

The team flies out on Thursday 17 March to its base in Cape Town and will play the first of six matches in their 2-week tour on Sunday 20 March against Northern Suburbs and will complete their matches on Tuesday 29 March against Western Province - hopefully at Newlands. Russell Adams who was the Club professional at Instonians for three years and is currently the Operations Manager for Western Province Cricket has generously assisted in arranging the matches.

A key objective of the Academy programme is to "fast-track" the best young talent in Northern Ireland. Participants have competed successfully for places at Inter-Provincial and International

level with boys who are one, two or even three years older than they are. Nearly all the boys have played at underage International level - a remarkable achievement. The Academy has proved an outstanding success and won the European Cricket Council award for the best Junior Development Programme in Europe.

This tour will provide a tremendous experience for the boys, an opportunity to play against quality opposition in one of the major cricket centres in the world and offer an educational experience, which will undoubtedly assist in their personal development. A highlight of the tour will be a visit to coach in the Langa Township - it should be a real "eye opener" for all concerned.

The Academy is extremely grateful to the Sports Council NI for its continued support through the Investing in Sport Programme and to all its benefactors, including parents, without whom it could not have undertaken this ambitious tour. A number of parents will be traveling to support the team.

To further finance the tour the NICA have published an excellent colour brochure which features

articles by Russell Adams, ex International rugby referee Brian Stirling and Ralph Coetzee who as a youth played at Newlands. Copies of the tour brochure (£2.50) are available from the players, coaches and the NICA office in the House of Sport. Email: brian-walsh@houseofsport.net

Tour Party

Greg Thompson, Captain (Lisburn), Christopher Dougherty (Bready), James Hall (Waringstown), Michael Heaney (Civil Service North), Robbie Kirk (Instonians), James Magowan (Downpatrick), Gavin McKenna (North Down), Jason Milligan (Fox Lodge), Steve Moore (Drummond), Lee Nelson (Waringstown), James Shannon (Instonians), Paul Stirling (Cliftonville), Stuart Thompson (Eglinton).

Brian Walsh - Tour Manager
Ian Johnston - Team Manager
Gordon McKenzie - Academy Head Coach
Bobby Rao - Academy Coach.