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INTERCONTINENTAL CUP GOES GLOBAL

The ICC's first-class competition for non-Test playing countries, the ICC Intercontinental Cup, will switch from a regional to a global tournament from 2006 onwards. Under a new format agreed at the recent meeting of the ICC Development Committee, the competition will become an eight-team tournament and in 2006 those teams will be divided into two groups with the winners of each group contesting a final. Then in 2007 and 2008 it will be conducted over a full round-robin format with all eight sides playing each other over those two years with the likelihood of a final between the top two line-ups. And as soon as it is deemed affordable, appropriate and feasible, it is planned to add a second division to the format, bringing with it the opportunity for promotion and relegation.

In a further alteration to the existing set-up, all matches will change from three to four days' duration from 2006 onwards. It will mean that each side plays a minimum of three four-day matches in the next ICC Intercontinental Cup and seven four-day matches over the 2007 – 2008 period compared to a minimum of just two three-day matches per year under the existing structure.

Commenting on the new format, ICC Global Development Man-

ager Matthew Kennedy said: "This new format means we can truly have the best playing the best for the right to be called the top Associate side at first-class level. "The existing regional system was an excellent starting point towards establishing the ICC Intercontinental Cup as a major international competition but it did have its limitations. "With only one team from each of the four regions qualifying for the semi-finals it meant it was not always possible to ensure the four strongest sides reached that knock-out stage. "This format removes that issue and also gives each side the chance to play more first-class matches. "And although the playing conditions for the 2006 tournament are yet to be finalised, the switch to four-day matches also means we now have the option to dispense with the current complex bonus points system as the extra time gives us a much better chance to get positive results," he added.

Trent Johnston, the captain of the current ICC Intercontinental Cup holders Ireland, welcomed the amendments to the format. "I think it's really exciting the ICC have turned it into a worldwide competition," he said. "It gives players the chance to compete in different conditions than they are used to and that has to be a good thing in terms of gaining experience. "The switch to four-

day cricket also means there is much more scope for tactics than was the case with the three-day format where the importance of bonus points meant it was often vital to win the toss, especially if the pitches were flat. "On top of that there are the extra matches. That means extra first-class exposure for players and that is another very positive outcome."

The two groups for the 2006 ICC Intercontinental Cup are as follows:

Group A

Ireland
Scotland
United Arab Emirates
Namibia or Nepal

Group B

Kenya
Bermuda
Canada
Netherlands

Ireland won the 2005 ICC Intercontinental Cup by Kenya by six wickets in the final in Windhoek, Namibia in October.

That result meant the trophy stayed in the Europe region as the inaugural winners of the tournament in 2004 were Scotland, which defeated Canada in the final, played in Sharjah in November of that year.

U19 WORLD CUP LAUNCHED

ICC President Ehsan Mani officially launched the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup (ICC U19 CWC) in Sri Lanka on Monday, 28th November and said that hosting the event will demonstrate the island's strength and resilience in the wake of last year's tsunami.

"In December 2004 Sri Lanka was devastated by a terrible tragedy yet 11 months later the country is preparing to welcome 15 overseas teams full of the best young cricketers in the world," said Mr Mani.

The teams are due to arrive in

Colombo on 31 January and, after an opening ceremony on 4 February, are scheduled to play 44 matches over 15 days at five different venues in the city, culminating in the final on Sunday 19 February at the R.Premadasa Stadium.

Mr Mani said one of the pleasures of the ICC U/19 CWC is the opportunity to spot the stars of the future and this tournament in Sri Lanka would once again offer spectators and followers that same chance.

The ICC U19 CWC is the sixth tournament of its type to take

place. Previous events have been held in Australia (1988), South Africa (1998), Sri Lanka (2000), New Zealand (2002) and Bangladesh (2004). Previous winners of the event are Australia (1988 & 2002), England (1998), India (2000) and Pakistan (2004).



UMPEYE GOES NAMIBIAN

Umpire Paul Baldwin officiated at the ICC Intercontinental Cup Semi Finals in Namibia. Here is an excerpt from his diary. For the full version, see www.ecc-cricket.com

It all started in early October as I received an email from the ICC in Dubai, again one of those nano second decisions when asked if I would be available to officiate in the ICC Intercontinental Trophy Semi Finals from the 23rd - 25th of October. Well you don't get an offer like that every day, so bags packed with copious amounts of sun cream I departed via Düsseldorf and Frankfurt for Windhoek.

Friday

Arriving in Namibia I was met by Geoff Luck, who I had stood together with 4 years before at the ICC Trophy in Toronto. We waited for the 2 members of the ICC International panel, Tony Hill from New Zealand and Russell Tiffin from Zimbabwe, to arrive on the next flight. I was due to stand with Tony, and Roger Dill from Bermuda the other member of the ICC Associates and Affiliates panel, with Russell.

Geoff drove, no let me rephrase that, raced... rallied... no, still to traumatised to explain properly! Anyway we were in Jeff's

truck on the 40 mile journey from the airport and were taken the scenic route and given a superb panoramic view of downtown Windhoek, however, by this time we were not able to keep our hands from shaking long enough to take a clear photograph although that could also have been through nicotine deprivation after the 9 hour flight!

We arrived at the Windhoek Country Club Resort, our meagre accommodation for the next week to find our rooms would not be ready until 2pm, bearing in mind that it was now only 11am what could we do? Well the only thing that umpires can do- retreat to the nearest bar, escorted by Jeff, and begin what is euphemistically described as a "Team building exercise". The team rapidly moulded their hands around the first cold bottle of "Tafel" beer and it was the last one we touched until after the Semi Final.

Well ok, maybe there was one more, but as Tony was to remind us throughout our stay, "We're only here for the Cricket!"

We met up with Chris Briers from the ICC and got ourselves organised and took some light refreshment, understandably

because of the altitude and possible dehydration during the flight.

The team management meeting was scheduled for 2.30pm and the umpires meeting for 1.30pm the following day. I retired to my room, once it had been allocated to get my head down.

Later in the evening Roger and I chanced our arm at the Chinese restaurant in the hotel and were pleasantly surprised by the food. Overlooking the casino it was an education to watch people feeding the machines and tables with money, and we both decided that it really was a mugs game and decided to call it a night.

Saturday

Our intrepid explorers made their way into town to explore the mysteries of Africa. It turned out to be more like any European town that you could wish to mention. Classy shops selling diamonds and jewelry at inflated prices, Manchester United and Arsenal shirts on display in every sports shop, hanging next to them South African rugby shirts and all the other merchandising that you would expect.

We made it back in time for the team meetings at the hotel and then Tony and I were driven across town to the United ground where we inspected the pitch...

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Paul with Tony Hill



The United Ground



Action from La Manga's 20/20 tournament
Photos: Denis Reardon



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LA MANGA 20/20 TOURNAMENT

Cricket teams from all over Spain came to La Manga to play the first ever 20/20 cricket tournament over two days recently and no one was disappointed with the standard of cricket. It was a great success for La Manga who were the main sponsor of the event and for Spanish cricket. Over 100 cricketers took part in the event and some juniors from the Spanish national team took part too and this was a great experience for them to take part in this event and to play against good Spanish senior cricketers. A big thank you to all the officials, scorers, umpires and ground staff who sacrificed their time and put in a great deal of hard work in order to make the 20/20 weekend a success.

The spectators who came from all over Spain to watch this first ever 20/20 event were not disappointed with the cricket that was played. Saturday saw the

8 teams play each other all day till dusk and then took a break for an excellent Gala Dinner given by our sponsor, La Manga Club, to all the cricketers, their families and friends. One special guest who had given up a lot of time to organise this event was the talented Ms Caren Wassink.

The final day saw the semi finals. Firstly, Valencia who won Group A and Campoamor CC, who came 2nd in Group B. Campoamor CC took the game to the last ball, Valencia needing 5 to win and Campoamor Captain George Wambeek saved the day with the last ball by restricting Valencia to 2 runs. The second semi final was an easy win for Calon who beat Barcelona CC with overs to spare. Barcelona 95 all out and Calon 96 for 3.

The Final was played with reduced overs due to light and

the two Captains agreed on a 12 over match. It was Calon CC who took first knock and put on a total of 127 for 5 in 12 overs, with their Captain Faren hitting 7 sixes to reach 62 not out. The Campoamor bowlers, Wambeek and Rodrogures, took all the wickets. Campoamor CC's batting soon saw Wasim Kahan bowled in the 2nd over for 8 and our Spanish junior who had made such a big impression over the weekend was not able to produce the big knock that everyone wanted and was run out on 30 and with Juan Rodrigues was not out on 14. Campoamor not able to cope with the tight bowling of Calon and were short by 38 runs.

The Champions Calon CC were delighted to win the first ever 20/20 at La Manga Club. The Man of the Tournament was awarded to S. Ali from Campoamor CC for his excellent batting and wicket keeping.
(G Wambeek)

DELLOR DELIVERS IN CORFU

Tim Dellor travelled to Greece, and the Island of Corfu, to deliver an ECB Level 1 to budding coaches. A dozen coaches gave up a long weekend to learn the subtleties to a game which has a long history in this Mediterranean holiday destination.....

When Lord Byron introduced the game of cricket to the Island of Corfu in the early 1820's, he had no idea how enthused and passionate the locals would become. Both the game and the island have moved on since the 1820's, but cricket still holds a special place in Corfiot life.

Novembers in Corfu see temperatures reach 20C and the autumnal sunshine puts any cricket lover in the mood. Nothing could be further from the dusty and inhospitable conditions England's cricketers were having to endure in Multan, during a first test watched by many via satellite television

back in Greece. While the celebrated main square in the heart of the old town lies deserted, and the more modern purpose built arena at the plush harbour is only inhabited by the occasional stray dog, Greek cricketers are working tirelessly indoors.

For some preparation for the forthcoming Indoor Championship, to be held at Lord's in February 2006 is uppermost in their thoughts. For teachers and coaches of the game it is a chance to hone their skills, developing the game to ensure future generations on the island enjoy the game.

Curiously, for a country which boasts such a favourable climate, Greece is blessed with many excellent indoor cricket facilities. They were ringing with the sound of ricocheting tennis balls and the thud of leather on willow this week as a dozen wannabe cricket instructors were put through their paces.

They are training to become the latest batch of Level 1 qualified coaches.

The ECB is encouraging new ideas and principles within the delivery of this basic qualification, some of which were included in the Greece course. The notion of Long Term Athlete Development, the use of questions to assist learning and creative planning and preparation were all well received. Excellence of demonstrations remains at the core of the course, and while nearby air traffic control needed alerting during a wild pull shot practise session, the candidates showed definite improvement.

There is a huge appetite for sport throughout Greece right now. If London Olympic 2012 organisers need to hold up an example of a legacy left by the games look no further than Athens and the rest of Greece. The enthusiasm has seeped through to non Olympic sports including cricket.

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Above: Tim Dellor

Below: Cricket in Corfu Town



UMPIRES' COURSE IN HOLLAND

The ECC were delighted to be able to send Ray Holyer to the Netherlands in November to run an ECC/ACUS GL6 Course and Exam.

This was the first official Course that the ECC have been asked to run in Holland and 16 eager students attended. Although many of the students have been umpiring for some years this was the first time that the ECC had become part of their education and Ray was put through the mill during a busy weekend.

The driving force behind achieving this historic event was local ACU&S Tutor, Steve Tovey – himself a veteran of ECC events, through his association with Belgian cricket – and Steve was able assist Ray in some of the sessions.

The weekend finished with the official ACU&S GL6 Examination and we are pleased to announce that the vast majority were successful.

This classroom success means that all the successful umpires are eligible for nomination to

most ECC Championships where they can further their education where it matters i.e. on the field.

In fact the first two to benefit from this are Hazel Smarius and Simon van de Vlekkert who will both be travelling to Lord's in February to officiate in the ECC Indoor Championships. We wish them every enjoyment and success at this prestigious event.



ICC Cricket World Cup
WEST INDIES 2007

Information on
purchasing tickets
can be found at
www.cricketworldcup.com

STUART BARNES VISITS FINLAND

Cricket continues to move forward with pace in Finland and during a weekend visit to Helsinki, I witnessed first hand the determination to keep the game developing and to reach as many of the indigenous population as possible.

A school session saw a group of twenty-four boys enjoy themselves enormously and want more sessions in the future. I was certainly impressed with how quickly the group grasped the basic concept of the game and there were at least four of

the group that had a good amount of tactical sense also.

The National Youth Team were given a four hour session to help prepare them for the ECC Indoor Championship at Lords in February and this was followed by the Finnish Cricket Association Annual Awards Dinner, an opportunity for all the clubs to get together, before it gets too cold, and relive the seasons successes.

It is clear that the game of cricket will become more popu-

lar, and with that comes the challenge of delivering the product based on the demand. This will be the biggest challenge faced by the FCA in the coming years. I have a hunch though that this is something that has been talked about and will be covered by the people on the 'coal face'.

As always it was great to catch up with everyone and I'm looking forward to seeing the game get bigger and bigger in the very near future.



Stuart Barnes



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The Europe Office
wishes everyone
a very
Happy Christmas
and successful
New Year



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ECC CONFIRMED DATES FOR 2006 - REVISED

ECC TOURNAMENTS

10-12 February	ECC European Indoor Championship	Lord's Cricket Ground Dublin, Ireland
18-20 July	ECC European U23 Championship	Deventer, Holland
18-20 July	ECC European U17 Division 1 Championship	Copenhagen, Denmark
25-27 July	ECC European U13 Division 1 Championship	Belfast, Ireland
25-31 July	ECC European U19 Championship (2 day)	Herning, Denmark
1-3 August	ECC European U15 Division 1 Championship	Glasgow, Scotland
3-9 August	ECC European Division 2 Championship	Glasgow, Scotland
4-9 August	ECC European Division 1 Championship	Glasgow
15-17 August	ECC European Women's U21 Championship	Israel
18-24 August	ECC European U17 Division 2 Championship	Belgium
26-30 August	ECC European Division 4 Championship	

OTHER ECC EVENTS

19-22 January	ECC Coaching Conference	Warwick, England
10 March	ECC Tournament Rules Sub-Committee Meeting	Lord's Cricket Ground
17-18 March	ECC Governance, Admin & Management Forum	Lord's Cricket Ground
29-30 March	ECC Tournament Officials Meeting	Lord's Cricket Ground
3-4 April	ICC Women's Committee Meeting	Melbourne
6 April	ECC Executive Meeting	Lord's Cricket Ground
8-9 April	ECC Umpires' Seminar	Antwerp, Belgium
11-14 April	ECC Centre of Excellence	La Manga, Spain
17-23 April	ECC European Cricket Academy	La Manga, Spain
13 May	ECC President's Day (1 st Test, England v Sri Lanka)	Lord's Cricket Ground
17-18 May	ICC Development Committee Meeting	Dubai
24-29 June	ECC European Cricket Academy	ECB NCC Loughborough
29 June	Europe XI v MCC	Holland
2-7 July	ICC Annual Conference	Lord's Cricket Ground
6 July	ECC AGM	Lord's Cricket Ground
7-11 August	ECC European Women's Cricket Academy	Fettes College, Edin.
September tba	ICC Women's Committee Meeting	Dubai
22-23 September	ECC Tournament Rules Sub-Committee Meeting	Lord's Cricket Ground
27 October	ECC Executive Meeting	Lord's Cricket Ground
27 October	ECC 10 th Anniversary Dinner	Lord's Cricket Ground
November tba	ICC Development Committee Meeting	Uganda

FARRELL'S SCHOLARSHIP

Ian Farrell from Gibraltar spent time playing in Warwickshire recently....read his full diary on www.ecc-cricket.com

One of the aims of the Gibraltar Cricket Association is to increase the exposure of their young cricketers to the rigours of batting on grass wickets. Batting on such a surface creates new challenges that are rarely encountered when batting week in week out in the Gibraltar league, where the games are always played out on artificial matting. Playing against the swinging and seaming ball on a regular basis can only improve a batsman's technique, so when I was offered the opportunity to play club cricket in the UK, it was a chance that I could not turn down.

The team that would offer me such a batting education was Halesowen CC, a strong ECB Birmingham League club. After arriving on the Friday evening there was little respite, as I was due to turn out for them on Saturday morning.

My first game was against West Bromwich Dartmouth CC at home. After bowling out the op-

position cheaply around the 120 mark, we got off to a strong start. I was due to bat at 5, yet as a few wickets tumbled, I soon found myself striding out to the middle. Once I had faced a few deliveries, I realised that the bounce was very low and slow, so I found myself thinking just get forward and you will be fine and whatever you do, don't get out! I pushed a few singles and felt slightly more relaxed at the crease, although I was getting slightly bogged down mostly due to tight fielding and my inability to hit the ball off the square! When the opening bowler sent a ball down that pitched just short of a length I did what came naturally and attempted a pull. Yet due to such a low bounce I got hit smack in front and given out lbw. It was the wrong shot in terms of the wicket conditions, yet back in Gibraltar it would have been a regulation shot with the ball bouncing much higher! I trudged off disappointed, knowing that I should have maintained my concentration in getting forward. Points to note: always play forward on English wickets.

The next 2 innings all involved the same mistake playing off the back foot. Games against Wolverhampton CC and Barnt Green CC both

involved lbw dismissals. It was clear that I was not adapting to constant front foot play, and for that split second where my eyes light up with pull! Hook! Boundary! I was paying the price. My education was exposing flaws that were mostly mental, that I must maintain my concentration levels and focus on each ball. Unlike back home, every delivery has its own box of tricks. Some will seam around with indifferent bounce, others will swing like a banana. I decided that if I wanted to hang around and make the most of playing in the UK, I must ensure that playing forward and minimising any swing or seam movement was the priority, not the flamboyant pull and cut stoke.

Following my initial dismal displays, I was allowed to tour with Old Edwardians CC for 5 games in 5 days against sides from Somerset and Wiltshire (Weston Super Mare CC, Keynsham CC, Warminster CC, to name a few). I was adamant that I would put into practice my thoughts and technical issues that had been highlighted following my previous displays, and it worked. Scores of 28, 38n.o. And 55n.o. cheered me up....