

Bangladesh targeting qualification for next World Cup

Ireland boss Bracewell faces New Zealand in Tri-Series

DUBLIN, May 11, (AFP): Exactly two years after his appointment, Ireland coach John Bracewell finally comes up against his native New Zealand in a triangular one-day international series, also involving Bangladesh, in Dublin.

Former off-spinner Bracewell played 41 Tests and 53 ODIs for New Zealand so it promises to be a special couple of days for the 59-year-old Auckland native when the teams meet on successive Sundays.

Each team will play the other twice over the next fortnight with Ireland facing Bangladesh in the opener at Malahide, near Dublin, on Friday.

The series is another major test for Ireland against two top seven ODI countries, after their historic first two one-day internationals in England last weekend, while Bangladesh and New Zealand are using the matches as valuable warm-ups ahead of the Champions Trophy — they are both in Group A and will meet in Cardiff on June 9.



Bracewell

CRICKET

Bangladesh are on the up — now ranked seventh in the world — and are already targeting qualification for the next World Cup in two years and their prospects will be enhanced if they can win one of their games against the fourth-ranked Kiwis and both encounters against Ireland.

That scenario would actually promote them to sixth in the ODI standings — the top eight at the end of September this year qualify for England 2019.

The Tigers have already enjoyed match action in Ireland with a facile 199-run victory against a second-string Ireland Wolves XI in Belfast on Wednesday, with Sabir Rahman retiring after reaching a century and Tamim Iqbal hitting 86 in a huge total



Kuwait fencing delegation with Public Authority for Sports officials.

Kuwait fencing team honoured for their distinguished achievement

Deputy Director General of Sports Affairs at Public Authority for Sports Dr Hamoud Fuleiteh hailed the Kuwaiti fencing team for its distinguished achievement in winning top place in the Arab Fencing Championship for Junior and Cadet, which recently concluded at Amman, Jordan.

In a press statement he issued after receiving the Kuwaiti fencing delegation at the airport, Dr Fuleiteh affirmed that the number of medals the team won in various types of fencing categories is a promising indication that Kuwait is excelling in the fencing sports locally and regionally.

Meanwhile, Head of the Kuwaiti fencing delegation Abdullah Al-Walaan dedicated this huge win to the political leadership, adding that the huge support provided by Public Authority for Sports to the national fencing team is regarded as the main reason for the team's success.

The Kuwaiti fencing team, which participated in the 2017 Arab Fencing Championship for Junior and Cadet, won a total of 20 medals in all fencing categories — sabre, epee and foil. They include eight gold medals, four silver medals and eight bronze medals.

It is worth mentioning that the Jordanian fencing team came second in the championship, followed by Iraq team in third place. A total of eight teams representing the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had participated in the championship.

of 394 for seven.

While Bangladesh, who have already had a week's training camp in England, have their full Champions Trophy squad in Ireland, the New Zealanders have no fewer than seven players unavailable because of Indian Premier League commitments.

The squad is captained, for the first time, by Tom Latham and two uncapped players are included, Central Districts fast bowler Seth Rance and Northern Districts all-rounder Scott Kuggeleijn.

Neil Wagner is set to play his first ODI, five years after his international debut, while also brought into the one-

day squad are fast bowler Hamish Bennett, batsmen Henry Nicholls and Colin Munro and all-rounder George Worker.

"I have worked hard the last few times on consistency and skills and change-ups and a few different deliveries," Wagner told the ESPN Cricinfo website.

New Zealand still have plenty of ex-

perience in their squad with Ross Taylor and Luke Ronchi plus proven performers in Jimmy Neesham, Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi.

Ireland, now on the verge of Test status, have had an underwhelming two years since Bracewell took over as coach and they were beaten 2-0 by

England last week.

But the squad will be desperate to prove that their performance at Lord's, when they scored 243 on Sunday, is a better reflection of their standing than their first-ever ODI in England when they were shut out for just 126 in Bristol last Friday.

Dillier in disbelief after Giro's stage six thriller

Jungels retains race leader's pink jersey



Swiss BMC rider Silvan Dillier celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 6th stage of the 100th Giro d'Italia, Tour of Italy, cycling race from Reggio di Calabria to Terme Luigiane on May 11. (AFP)

Hansen plays down England WC threat

Japan a sardine in the sandwich, says Joseph

KYOTO, Japan, May 11, (AFP): Japan coach Jamie Joseph said Thursday that the Brave Blossoms were World Cup small fry, despite a breakout performance two years ago.

The host nation will share the same pool as Ireland and Scotland for the 2019 tournament following Wednesday's draw in Kyoto, where Joseph confessed to feeling a little intimidated.

"It wasn't until I got on the stage beside (All Blacks coach) Steve Hansen and (England's) Eddie Jones that I realised the magnitude," the New Zealander told reporters.

"I felt like a small sardine amongst a bunch of tuna."

Japan shed their erstwhile tag as World Cup whipping boys at the

RUGBY

2015 World Cup, where they recorded three victories under Jones, including a stunning 34-32 win over two-time champions South Africa.

They have struggled to build on that momentum since, but avoiding the likes of the All Blacks, England and Australia in the group stage at least gives them a fighting chance on home soil.

New Zealand coach Steve Hansen warned England they could struggle to get out of a treacherous group for the



Joseph

in Pool D at the draw in Kyoto on Wednesday.

The group will also contain two yet-to-be-determined qualifiers from Oceania (Fiji, Tonga or Samoa) and the Americas (United States, Canada or Uruguay).

TERME LUIGIANE, Italy, May 11, (AFP): Silvan Dillier was in disbelief after bouncing back from a puncture to cap a 200km breakaway with the biggest win of his career in a thrilling Giro d'Italia sixth stage on Thursday.

BMC's Dillier suffered a flat tyre in the opening metres of an undulating 217km ride from Reggio di Calabria to Terme Luigiane, the first first stage of the 100th Giro edition held on the Italian mainland.

But, with a stage win on his mind, the 26-year-old Swiss chased back on, fought to help a five-man breakaway escape the peloton and, in a thrilling duel with Jasper Stuyven, prevailed in the drive to an uphill finish line that proved slightly too steep for the Belgian.

"The stage started pretty bad for me, I had a flat tyre at kilometre zero then I chased back and fought to get into the breakaway," said Dillier.

"To beat Jasper Stuyven in a sprint like this is crazy for me! I still can't

CYCLING

believe this. It's the biggest victory so far for me. It's fantastic."

Luxembourg's Bob Jungels retained the race leader's pink jersey after finishing eighth, 39secs behind the front-runners, to maintain his six-second lead on Sky's Geraint Thomas.

"We were hoping the breakaway would go until the end so the (time) bonuses were gone," said Jungels.

It meant plenty of stage victory hopefuls were left disappointed after a routine day in the saddle turned into a desperate chase.

Dillier, Stuyven, Trek teammate Mads Pedersen, Austrian Lukas Postlberger and Italian Simone Andreotta raced to a lead of nearly nine minutes at one stage.

That was cut to five and a half minutes with 100km to race but a lack of collaboration in the chase meant the frontrunners were still nearly three minutes in front 10km from the finish.

As they headed for a technical finish featuring a series of small climbs, descents and tight hairpin bends, Pedersen peeled off, his legs no longer able to maintain the unrelenting pace.

But Stuyven, who claimed his maiden Grand Tour stage win at the Vuelta a Espana last year, remained defiant, launching an attack nearly six kilometres out that proved fatal to Andreotta's bid to hand Italy their maiden win of the 100th edition.

"He wasn't doing a lot of work with us, so it was best to get rid of him in case he'd kept his energy for the finish," said Stuyven of Andreotta.

Alonso tells McLaren — speed up or I'm off

Bottas seeks to double up in Barcelona

BARCELONA, May 11, (AFP): Valtteri Bottas seeks to prove his maiden Formula One success at Sochi was no fluke by repeating the feat for champions Mercedes in this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix.

The unflappable Finn, who has emerged as a serious threat not only to his more celebrated teammate Lewis Hamilton, but also Ferrari's championship leader Sebastian Vettel, believes his determination, form and speed justify his optimism.

"Getting that win has definitely given me a lot of confidence that I can do it - because I always thought that I had the ability."

"And now it's done all I want to do is to go and win again and again," said Bottas.

Another Bottas win would not be a surprise at a venue that has a habit of producing more different winners than anywhere else - if he is successful, he will be the 11th different winner in as many years.

Meanwhile, Lewis Hamilton is hopeful his Mercedes team have solved the performance problems that hit him at last month's Russian Grand Prix.

The three-time champion finished fourth behind triumphant team-mate Valtteri Bottas and both Ferraris in

MOTOR RACING

Sochi, leaving the circuit baffled by his lack of pace.

But on arrival at the Circuit de Catalunya, along with his dog Roscoe, ahead of this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix, the Briton said Mercedes had a "good understanding" of his Russian troubles.

Two-time champion Fernando Alonso said he will be open to offers from rival teams if McLaren continue to struggle next season.

The Spaniard told a news conference ahead of the Spanish Grand Prix that he was happy with the team, but that his aim was to try and win a third drivers' world title.

"My intention, and my first priority, is to race here (F1) next year, but not just to race... Also to win. I'm happy with the team, but we are not winning."

"If from here to September, or October, I see an opportunity to win in 2018, I'll be more than happy to stay."

"If it's not the case, I will be more than happy to talk to anyone..."

Kevin Magnussen won a coin toss with his Haas team-mate Romain Grosjean on Thursday to be the first driver to have the team's upgrades on his car at this weekend's Spanish Grand Prix.

The young Dane will have the new parts fitted for Friday's two practice sessions while Frenchman Grosjean will have to wait until Saturday's third free session.

The Haas team has a new 'floor' to introduce. Team boss Gunter Steiner said that unexpected "production delays" at chassis partner Dallara had created the need for the coin toss.

Daredevils 'hold off' Lions after final-over in IPL thriller



Delhi Daredevils cricketer Amit Mishra plays a shot during the 2017 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Delhi Daredevils and Gujarat Lions at the Green Park Stadium in Kanpur on May 10. (AFP)

KANPUR, India, May 11, (AP): Delhi Daredevils pulled off a successful run chase against Gujarat Lions to win by two wickets with two balls left on Wednesday in the Indian Premier League.

Both teams were already unable to advance to the playoffs.

Lions reached a challenging 195-5 in its 20 overs after Daredevils

CRICKET

won the toss and chose to field at Green Park. Australian right-hander Aaron Finch top-scored for Lions with 69 runs off 39 balls before being bowled by Mohammed Shami. Finch shared a 92-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Dinesh Karthik (40 off 28).

In reply, Daredevils scored 197-8, mostly thanks to Shreyas Iyer with 96 off 57, including 15 fours and two sixes. But the 22-year-old Indian was bowled by Basil Thampi in the last over to make the score 189-8 with four balls left.

Cricket Roundup

MCC honor for Laxman

Kapil backs India to defend title

NEW DELHI, May 11, (Agencies): Cricket legend Kapil Dev is backing India to win a new Champions Trophy title next month, saying the team has the ability to go the distance in the 50-over tournament.

India, who beat hosts England in the 2013 final, have retained eight players from that successful campaign including skipper Virat Kohli.

Senior players like former captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who lifted the trophy at Edgbaston, and premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin feature in the 15-man Indian squad to go to England and Wales.

India edged past England 2-1 during their one-day international series in January, with the players continuing their good showing in Tests and Twenty20 matches.

"The way they are playing, yes, definitely...I believe we have the team and the ability," Kapil said of India's chances of defending their title in the tournament starting June 1.

As long as India stay clear of injuries "I don't see any reason why we can't win the event," Kapil said.

Former India batsman V.V.S. Laxman has been elected an honorary life member of Marylebone Cricket Club, it was announced

on Thursday. Laxman joins fellow former India top-order team-mates Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly as an honorary life member of MCC, the owners of London's Lord's ground — widely known as the 'Home of Cricket'.

Indian police arrested three people in Kanpur suspected of illegal betting on cricket matches, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Thursday, a day after the city hosted its first Indian Premier League (IPL) game of the season.

"The Anti Corruption Unit of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has been tracking activities of certain individuals, as a result of which, three suspects were arrested," BCCI said in a statement.

Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc said Thursday Australia's fast bowling quartet is ready to "wreak havoc" at next month's Champions Trophy one-day tournament in England.

Starc, who has recovered from a foot injury that cut short his India Test tour in March, said he is excited by the prospect of combining with his fellow speedsters at the Champions Trophy.