

Cricket Sixes to be bigger than ever

By Andy Johnstone

KARON: The surging interest in cricket on the island will reach its zenith between April 12 and 16 with the third Phuket International Cricket Sixes tournament, to be played for the third year at Karon Stadium.

The tournament has expanded hugely. This year 28 teams are expected to play, compared with 18 last year and 10 in 2004, the event's inaugural year.

The teams set to play will again demonstrate the popularity of the game, which, arguably, comes joint second with rugby behind soccer as the world's most popular team game.

Twenty-four of the teams will fly into Phuket from the UK,

Australia, Singapore, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, Taiwan, Macau, mainland China, Hong Kong and Malaysia – with the remainder coming from Thailand, including local Phuket teams.

Michael "Cat" Maher, Chairman of the Asian Cricket Sixes Tour, noted, "Cricket is one of the highest-profile sports in the world, and the Phuket International Cricket Sixes really showcases the island to millions of cricket lovers across the globe as a wonderful destination."

Tournament Director Brad Tarr said, "We're delighted that in only the third year of the tournament, we're expecting 28 teams to compete at this year's Phuket Sixes," adding, "The response has been tremendous."

Event Director Poonpun 'Nui' Jangrugsa of The Green Man said, "The Phuket Sixes is growing ever more popular and we are looking forward to welcoming a record number of [players] to Phuket this year."

Spectators will be welcome to come and enjoy this year's tournament, which will include a number of nighttime matches. Hours of play will be from 2 pm to 6 pm on the opening day of the tournament while play will be between 10 am and 10 pm on the remaining days. Entry is free.

For further information about the Phuket International Cricket Sixes 2006, see the event website at www.phuketsixes.com

Boonsak dominates badminton tourney

SAPHAN HIN: Chiang Mai native Boonsak Polsana won the men's singles in the first round of the Master Thailand Badminton Professional 2006 series held at the Saphan Hin Sports Complex from February 23 to 26.

K. Boonsak, 24, also paired up with his sister Salakjit to take the mixed doubles.

Phuket was the venue for the first round of the competition, organized jointly by the Badminton Association of Thailand and Sports Authority of Thailand to "discover" the best badminton players in the country, region by region.

Three more venues are slated to host the talent search: Khon Kaen (March 16-19), Rayong (May 18-21) and Chiang Mai (July 13-16). The final round will be held in Bangkok in September.

Boonsak, currently ranked 15th in the world, told the *Gazette* that the match had gone better than he expected.

Maybe, he said, his opponent in the final, Chaipong Laemkhaothong, had played too much

the previous day and, as a result, was tired.

As to the champion's background, he explained, "I started to play badminton when I was nine years old and come from a sporting family. My parents support and encourage us. If things go on like I hope they will, I hope to break into the top 10 in the world this year."

"I would like to see badminton better known and for more people to take part in the sport, both professionally and in amateur circles."

"As for me, I have a week in which to relax and then I'm playing in the Chinese Masters in Chendu. This year I have about 20 tournaments lined up. One thing I can say about Phuket is that it's very hot here."

Results: Men's singles: Boonsak Polsana; Woman's singles: Sorajja Jansrisukod; Men's doubles: Thitipong Lapoh & Jakkaphan Thanathiraphan; Women's doubles: Saisamorn Chattanupakorn & Wathu Wangthiraamnuay; Mixed doubles: Boonsak Polsana & Salakjit Polsana.

BCIS hosts Norwegian swim camp

PHUKET: Eleven swimmers from the Norwegian national team recently visited Phuket for an intensive training camp held at the British Curriculum International School (BCIS) February 10 to 28.

Petter Lovberg, coach of Norway's national swim team, explained to the *Gazette* that the team enjoyed training six to eight hours a day amid Phuket's beautiful scenery and warm weather, which is in sharp contrast to the February climate in Scandinavia.

The camp was organized to prepare the athletes for the Norwegian National Swimming Championships.

Six of them – Alexander Hetland, Aleksander Dale Oen, Yard Kvale, Anne-Mari Yulbrandsen, Lise Fadnes and Elisabeth Farland – will also train for three weeks in their home country before going to Shanghai to compete in the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA) World Championships from April 5 to 9.



Lisa 'The Black Widow' King, one of the boxers coming to Phuket, has a record of five wins, one draw and one loss. She has been described as being 'armed with a killer smile and good right cross'.

WHAT A KNOCKOUT!

SAPHAN HIN: NS Sport and online flower delivery service Misslily.com will jointly host the Miss Lily Super Model Muay Thai Championships 2006 on March 10, featuring five female kick-boxers from the US.

The event will be held at the Saphan Hin Sports Complex, starting at 3 pm.

Organizers Surasak Mookpradap of NS Sport (Thailand) and Rawat Chindapol, Managing Director of Miss Lily (Thailand), said the aim of the female fight night will be to promote Phuket's continuing post-tsunami recovery.

Also at the event will be a Hollywood production crew who were involved in the in the *Charlie's Angels* movies, shooting scenes for an upcoming movie.

The boxers, who will arrive in Thailand on March 2, are Ardra Hernandez, Gina Carano, Lisa "The Black Widow" King, Christine Toledo and super-model Ariana Ramirez.

The match will be broadcast live by Thai TV Channel 5 and by NS Sport to 170 countries, the organizers say. Admission is free of charge.

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