

"Aussie GRIT"

to be tested at Champions Trophy

MANOJ VATSYAYANA

Australia waited eight years before winning the Champions Trophy in 2006 and are not expected to relax their grip easily when the 2009 tournament begins in South Africa next week.

Smiles were back on the faces of their opponents after their recent Ashes defeat, but quickly disappeared following their one-day series victory over England.

The famous 'Aussie grit' will be on view again when they begin the defence of their title even without some of their key players who figured prominently in their Champions Trophy win in India three years ago.

Australia wear a different look this time as they are missing four of their 2006 stars, Glenn McGrath, Adam Gilchrist, Damien Martyn and Andrew Symonds, but skipper Ricky Ponting does not appear to be short of confidence.

"We've got great depth in Aus-

tralian cricket and I think this is one of the things that has held us ahead of the game for the last seven or eight years," Ponting said.

"We expect the young guys who come into the side to make an impact as well as those who have been in the side for some time." Australia are in Group A with unpredictable Pakistan, in-form India and the depleted West Indies. Easy matches are not expected in Group B, with South Africa, Sri Lanka, England and New Zealand all capable of raising their game. The top two sides from each group advance to the semi-finals, with the final to be played at Centurion on October 5.

India and South Africa emerge as strong challengers to Australia following their impressive recent performances. South Africa, enjoying home advantage, have beaten Australia in away and home one-day series this year.

South Africa will also be keen to break a jinx of not winning a major title at home, having flopped at the 2003 World Cup and then the 2007

Twenty20 World Championships. Australia are expected to cruise past the West Indies, who are without their first-choice team following a bitter contract row between the players and their cricket board.

The West Indies recently suffered a humiliating setback at home when their second-string side lost both Test and one-day series against Bangladesh. Australia need to be at their best in the remaining two matches and will have to beat either India or World Twenty20 champions Pakistan to boost their chances of making it to the semi-finals.

A cracker of a match awaits fans when arch-rivals India and Pakistan clash for the first time in more than a year. The cricketing ties snapped between the two nations following last year's Mumbai attacks.

"No rivalry can match the India-Pakistan rivalry and I think the September 26 match will be something billions of people all over the world will be waiting for," said Pakistani paceman Umar Gul. India are enjoying a dream one-

day run, their five successive bilateral series wins under captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and coach Gary Kirsten boosted further by Monday's success over Sri Lanka.

England won the Ashes in a spectacular fashion, but their performance left a lot to be desired in the subsequent one-day series against Australia. They have also lost much of their strength in the absence of injured match-winning duo of Kevin Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff. Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara leads an exciting band of cricketers - Sanath Jayasuriya, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Muttiah Muralitharan and Mahela Jayawardene - but expects his team to be more consistent. New Zealand can never be underestimated as they have match-winners in skipper Daniel Vettori, Brendon McCullum, Ross Taylor and Jesse Ryder. The return of paceman Shane Bond has also strengthened their attack. **NEW DELHI, Wednesday (AFP)**



Ricky Ponting
Australia captain

Squads

Squads for the ICC Champions Trophy for the September 22-October 5 tournament taking place in South Africa:

Australia: Ricky Ponting (capt), Michael Clarke, Nathan Bracken, Callum Ferguson, Nathan Hauritz, Ben Hilfenhaus, James Hopes, Michael Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee, Tim Paine, Peter Siddell, Adam Voges, Shane Watson, Cameron White.

England: Andrew Strauss (capt), James Anderson, Ravi Bopara, Tim Bresnan, Stuart Broad, Paul Collingwood, Joe Denly, Eoin Morgan, Graham Onions, Matt Prior, Adil Rashid, Owais Shah, Ryan Sidebottom, Graeme Swann, Luke Wright.

India: Mahendra Singh Dhoni (capt), Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh, Yashu Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Praveen Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Ashish Nehra, Rudra Pratap Singh, Amit Mishra, Dinesh Karthik, Abhishek Nayyar.

New Zealand: Daniel Vettori (capt), Neil Broom, Brendon Dismant, Grant Elliott, Martin Gough, Gareth Hopkins, Brendon McCullum, Kyle Mills, Jacob Oram, Jeevan Patel, Jesse Ryder, Ross Taylor, Daryl Tuffey, Shane Bond, Ian Butler.

Pakistan: Younus Khan (capt), Imran Nazir, Misbah-ul-Haq, Umar Akmal, Shoaib Malik, Shahid Afridi, Rana Naved-ul-Hasan, Fawad Alam, Mohammad Yousuf, Kamran Akmal, Umar Gul, Mohammad Asmir, Mohammad Asif, Rao Iftikhar, Saeed Ajmal.

South Africa: Graeme Smith (capt), Johan Botha, Hashim Amla, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Albie Morkel, Makhaya Ntini, Wayne Parnell, Robin Peterson, Dale Steyn, Lomvoabo Tsotsobe, Roodol van der Merwe.

Sri Lanka: Kumar Sangakkara (capt), Sanath Jayasuriya, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Upul Tharanga, Mahela Jayawardene, Thilan Samarawera, Chamara Kapugedara, Angelo Mathews, Muttiah Muralitharan, Ajantha Mendis, Thilan Thushara, Nuwan Kulasekara, Dhammika Prasad, Lasith Malinga, Thilina Kandamby.

West Indies: Floyd Reifer (capt), Darren Sammy, David Bernard, Tino Best, Royston Greenwood, Travis Dowlin, Andre Fletcher, Nikita Miller, Kevin McLean, Kieran Powell, Dale Richards, Kemar Roach, Devon Smith, Gavin Tonge, Chadwick Walton.

JOHANNESBURG, Wednesday (AFP)



Younus Khan
Pakistan captain



Trophy Factfile

Factfile on the ICC Champions Trophy which takes place from September 22-October 5 in South Africa:

Umpires: Billy Bowden (NZL), Aleem Dar (PAK), Steve Davis (ENG), Ian Gould (ENG), Daryl Harper (AUS), Tony Hill (NZL), Asad Rauf (PAK), Simon Taufel (AUS).

Referees: Jeff Crowe (NZL), Roshan Mahanama (SRI), Jagavall Smith (IND).
Format: One-day international - 50 overs a side.
Prize money: Winners - 2 million dollars. Runners-up - 1 million. Losing semi-finalists - 400,000 each. Third in groups - 100,000 each.
Note: Teams finishing last in groups receive no money.

Previous tournaments:

Year	Venue	Winners	Runners-up
1998	Batavia	South Africa	West Indies
2000	Kenya	New Zealand	India
2002	Sri Lanka, India, Sri Lanka shared trophy		
2004	England	West Indies	England
2006	India	Australia	West Indies

Note: 2002 final washed out twice.

Most runs: Chris Gayle (WIS) 695.
Most wickets: Muttiah Muralitharan (SRI) 23.

JOHANNESBURG, Wednesday (AFP)

Fixtures

ICC Champions Trophy fixtures for the September 22 - October 5 tournament taking place in South Africa (times GMT):

Group A

Sept 23: At Wanderers, Johannesburg - Pakistan v West Indies 1230.

Sept 26: At Johannesburg - Australia (holders) v West Indies 0730. At SuperSport Park, Centurion - India v Pakistan 1230.

Sept 27: At Centurion - Australia v India 1230.

Sept 30: At Centurion - Australia v Sri Lanka 0730. At Johannesburg - India v West Indies 1230.

Group B

Sept 22: At Centurion - South Africa v Sri Lanka 1230.

Sept 24: At Centurion - South Africa v New Zealand 0730.

Sept 25: At Johannesburg - England v Sri Lanka 1230.

Sept 27: At Johannesburg - New Zealand v Sri Lanka 0730. At Centurion - South Africa v England 1230.

Sept 29: At Johannesburg - England v New Zealand 1230.

Semi-finals

Oct 2: At Centurion - Group A winners v Group B runners-up 1230.

Oct 3: At Johannesburg - Group B winners v Group A runners-up 1230.

Final

Oct 5: At Centurion - Winning semi-finalists 1230.

JOHANNESBURG, Wednesday (AFP)

RANKINGS

ICC ODI championship rankings ahead of eight-nation 2009 Champions Trophy between September 22 and October 5 in South Africa:

1. South Africa, 2. India, 3. Australia, 4. Pakistan, 5. Sri Lanka, 6. New Zealand, 7. England, 8. West Indies, 9. Bangladesh, 10. Zimbabwe, 11. Ireland, 12. Kenya

England, Pakistan are Champions Trophy odd couple

Although the ICC Champions Trophy is just five tournaments old, it has delivered six different winners with England and Pakistan the only unsuccessful top-eight nations.

South Africa, New Zealand, West Indies and Australia won the mini-Cricket World Cup outright and Sri Lanka and India shared the honour after rain ruined two attempts to complete the 2002 Colombo

climax. The finalist batting second always triumphs and the top scorer in three of the four deciders, Philo Wallace of India and Marcus Trescothick of England, finished a loser.

Launched to raise funds for non-Test-playing nations, the tournament has had an identity crisis with as many formats as editions and a name change from ICC Knockout Trophy after the second version.

Tournament history:

to face just 12 and 51 in reply. India, dumped as hosts over tax-exemption problems, pipped South Africa by 10 runs in the semi-final highlight of the tournament with the retirement of Herschelle Gibbs (119 not out) triggering a Proteas collapse.

2006 West Indies became the first country to reach three Champions Trophy finals, but there was no London-like salvage operation as Australia cruised to an eight-wicket Mumbai success.

Nathan Bracken (3-22) inflicted most damage as the defending champions managed only 138 and an undefeated 57 from Shane Watson lifted Australia to 116-2 when rain intervened and the Duckworth-Lewis method came into play.

Winning skipper Brian Lara said his team drew inspiration in London from television pictures of hurricanes lashing the

JOHANNESBURG, Wednesday (AFP)

1998

The late Hansie Cronje and current squad member Jacques Kallis shone as South Africa beat West Indies by four wickets with 18 balls to spare in Bangladesh for their sole ICC competition victory. Wallace struck 11 fours and five sixes as he contributed 103 of 245 runs while Kallis claimed 5-30 before an unbeaten 61 from skipper Cronje led the Proteas to 248-6 against an attack that produced no star performer.

2000

Chris Cairns and Chris Harris were the stars as New Zealand recovered from the cheap loss of five wickets to reach 265-6 with two balls to spare and defeat India by four wickets in Kenya.

Cairns (102 not out) and Harris (46) shared a 122-run sixth-wicket partnership to foil India who were indebted to Ganguly (117) and Sachin Tendulkar (69) as they made 264-6 off 50 overs.

2002

Sri Lanka made 244 and 222 respectively in two efforts to complete the final only for rain to play spoilsport with India managing