



## Press Release - Full

February 20, 2006

### Re : Cricket Masala Festival

An exciting addition to the cricket calendar has been born today with the launch of the inaugural **Cricket Masala Festival** to be held on **April 9, 2006 at Bankstown Ovals 1 & 2** as part of the annual **Harmony day** celebrations. The Commonwealth Bank has agreed to be the major sponsor of the festival.

"The Commonwealth Bank welcomes the opportunity to support the inaugural Cricket Masala Festival" Executive General Manager – International Financial Services, Geoff Coates said today. "Through Cricket Masala we would like to say thank you to the South Asian community for their support of us over the years and it is a great way to finish another strong summer of Australian cricket."

Playing in the tournament are the elite South Asian Sydney cricketers representing **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Combined Universities, Rest of the World (South Africa, Fiji, Kenya) and India Sports Club**. The host country will be represented by the **NSW Aboriginal Allstars** team. Simultaneously on Bankstown Oval 2, an Under 18 tournament will be held featuring India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The format is thrilling **6-A-Side** featuring 5 overs per innings and **no LBW's**. Each team is allowed a maximum of 1 import from outside Sydney and there will be lots of prizes to be won including crowd catches, the most sixes hit and the most wickets taken.

Ex Australian captain Steve Waugh is a supporter of the Cricket Masala festival, "I'm delighted that this event is happening. Cricket is the obsession of India and Australia and 1 billion people can't be wrong. It's good to see the local South Asian talent starting to come through the grades and what better venue than Bankstown Oval, a ground which holds so many great memories for me"

Cricket Masala is the first elite tournament in Australia allowing the young cricketers of South Asian origin to represent their ancestral homeland. In addition there has not been a Festival that integrates the unique carnival atmosphere of Cricket, Food, Entertainment and Music that defines the South Asian Cricket tradition.

"We are excited to bring Sydney's elite South Asian Cricketers, Chefs and Entertainers together in one fiery Masala" Event Manager Patrick Skene said. "6-A-Side makes 20/20 look like an insurance seminar. South Asians are the world 6-A-Side specialists and they love to rain down sixes. And if you get tired of those, Cricket Masala offers free modified cricket games, free coaching, cultural entertainment and sweet and spicy cuisine all to the sounds of Bollywood, Bhangra and Baila."

SBS have agreed to film the Event and feature it in an episode of the upcoming second season of "**HERE COMES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD**" to be aired in June 2006 and hosted by Pria Viswalingam.



Stepan Kerkyasharian, Chair, Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW enthusiastically supports the event. "Cricket is one of the great unifiers – it builds character and a sense of fair play. 'Cricket Masala' appropriately depicts the vibrancy attained by the blending of cultures."

UTS Balmain's [Manjot Singh](#), a former Australian Under 17 representative and captain of the **Indian** team is looking forward to the Festival and said today. "I can't wait to test my skills in 6-A-Side and we have a strong team with some serious firepower. I'll have some friends on the sideline playing the dhol and will be drinking sugar cane juice between overs. Bring it on."

Former Indian Test cricketer and now Blacktown pace bowler [Subroto Banerjee](#) was equally excited "I love 6-A-Side. It's a Wild West showdown of the All Rounders and I've played it all over the world. One of the happiest days of my life was when I belted Andre Nel for 3 sixes in a row in the Hong Kong 6-A-Side." When pressed on India's chances in Cricket Masala, [Banerjee](#) offered; "I like our chances in this competition as we have young legs combined with experience. But who knows? In 6-A-Side reputations count for nothing"

The **Rest of the World** team is to be captained by [Lisa Sthalekar](#), NSW Breakers captain and recently appointed Australian women's team (Southern Stars) vice captain. Sthalekar was born in Pune, India, and came to Australia by way of Kenya whom she represents in the tournament. When asked about playing with the boys, [Lisa](#) responded "I'm more worried about getting to all the food stalls than playing with the boys. I've played against them all my life and I expect no favours. On the Rest of the World's chances, [Sthalekar](#), who plays for Universities, added "We are underdogs but our team includes Kevin Pillay who is destroying bowling attacks in Sydney first grade for St George. Expect the unexpected".

Recent NSW 2<sup>nd</sup> 11 selection, Randwick Petersham's [Usman Khawaja](#) was upbeat about Pakistan's chances. "I'm honoured to captain **Pakistan** in this tournament. We have a young team and we hope the Pakistan community will come out to support us." Khawaja, who recently starred in Australia's Under 19 World Cup campaign in Sri Lanka in February 2006 also offered the following prediction: "Pakistan produces quality All Rounders and our team is no exception. On paper there are stronger teams but like all Pakistani teams we will be full of surprises"

Indian Australian cricket author and historian [Kersi Meher-Homji](#) sees the Festival as a new landmark on the Sydney horizon. "I'm told there are now over 90 South Asian players in Sydney Grade cricket. It's a fantastic phenomenon to see kids joining the local teams, making friends and making representative sides. Sydney Grade cricket is the toughest and most aggressive grade cricket competition in the world and it is great to see Usman Khawaja, Manjot Singh among others patiently building their careers as Australian cricketers with a South Asian flavour. I can't wait to see cricket in the express lane in April. I'll be carrying a helmet and an umbrella to avoid being hit on the head by those sixes!"

Ex Bangladesh 1999 World Cup [captain](#) and now South Sydney All Rounder [Aminul Islam](#) was non committal on Bangladesh's chances. "As usual we will be underestimated and that's the way we like it. In 6-A-Side we (Bangladesh) regularly beat Australia captained by Steve Waugh". Islam who also coaches the University of NSW grade cricket team added. "Beware the sleeping Bengal tigers"



**Sri Lanka** is bolstered by the inclusion of NSW Squad Member and 20/20 opener [Jarrad Burke](#), and are early favourites. Burke who plays for Campbelltown Camden and was the [2004/05 O'Reilly Medal winner](#) is excited. "What a great way to finish the season. I'm not sure about the favourites tag but it will be a lot of fun to play 6-A-Side with talents like Ahillen and Cos Beadle." Penrith's [Ahillen Beadle](#), of Sri Lankan heritage by way of Bahrain and an Australian hero in the [2004 Under 19 World Cup](#) added "Representing Sri Lanka is a cool thing and will make my parents proud. And with no LBW's the Lankans plan to put on a hitting display Jayasuriya style"

The **NSW Aboriginal Allstars** will be selected from the Imparja Cup to be held in Alice Springs in late February, 2006. Russell Grimson, Cricket NSW Indigenous Cricket Community Officer was positive about his teams chances "Our guys are athletic and fearless and it will be great to see how they adapt to 6-A-Side." The Allstars will be captained by University of NSW and NSW 20/20 star [Daniel Christian](#) who was very optimistic about his teams chances "The fast and furious South Asian style is similar to the Koori style and when the smoke clears we could well be last team standing."

Fans attending the day will be treated to a feast of entertainment and interactive fun including the **Milo Cricket Zone** which will be run by [Cricket NSW](#) from 10am till 2pm aimed at teaching young children (5-8) through the **Milo Have a Go Program** and a junior development program for young girls (10-13) through the **Cric Hit** modified cricket program. For the Child, Teen and Adult **Fast Bowlers of Sydney**, the moment of truth has arrived in the **Milo Cricket Zone** where quicks of all age groups will go head to head in the **Milo Speedgun Challenge** with prizes for the fastest bowler in each age category. For the more **serious players**, the Kingsgrove Cricket Academy will be running personalised batting technique clinics using the bowling machine.

There will also be a prize for each crowd catch as well as for the funkiest fan for each team. Fans are encouraged to bring their flags, paint their faces and bring drums, trumpets and South Asian instruments etc.

In the adjoining Bankstown Gardens the entertainment and food festival will run throughout the day. Event Manager and President of [Bhavan Australia](#), Gambhir Watts is excited about the entertainment lineup "[Kamahl](#) has agreed to perform for us and in addition we will have a quality lineup of South Asian entertainment including Indian Idol contestants **Rucha Lange** and **Shivangi Vyas** and the sweet Sri Lankan bails of **Guinn Ragel** and Nightshift. And between acts we will be discovering tomorrow's stars with "**Masala Idol**" Crowd Karaoke." The event will also feature a **free Bollywood dancing workshop** and an **all levels Yoga class** on the lawn in the Gardens.

**Cricket Masala** is a joint venture between Bhavan Australia and Offstick Productions with Commonwealth Bank as the Major Sponsor. Key partners include Bankstown City Council, Milo, SBS, PanGlobal TV, Bankstown Sports Club, Cumberland Media Group, Indian Link News and Radio, Bankstown Cricket Club and uniform sponsors Kingsgrove Sports.

## Fast Facts

### What : Cricket Masala Festival

**Where** : Bankstown Ovals 1 & 2 (Memorial Oval and Grahame Thomas Oval) – Corner Chapel Road South and Macauley Avenue, Bankstown – UBD Map 271 Q2, Gregorys Map 399 D2



**When :** Sunday April 9, 2006

**Time :** 8.30am – 6.30 pm

**Tickets :** \$5 for Adults, \$3 for Concession, Children and Seniors (Family of 4 for \$15) with part proceeds going to the World Vision Kashmir Earthquake fund.

### **Press Release - Short Summary**

Cricket Masala is a celebration of Harmony Day and the end of the cricket season in Australian South Asian style with big sixes, entertainment and sweet and spicy food from the subcontinent.

The cricket component of the festival is a single day fast paced 6-A-Side cricket tournament featuring [8 Open men's and 4 Under 18's teams](#) comprising the elite South Asian and Aboriginal players currently playing in Sydney Grade cricket. The tournament features include 5 over innings, sixes galore, No LBW's and will be held on April 9, 2006 at [Bankstown Ovals 1 and 2](#).

In the beautiful Bankstown City Gardens adjacent to the main oval, the food and entertainment component will feature Food stalls from each community and Entertainment to be organised by Avijit and Bhavan Australia including the smooth sounds of [Kamahl, Sri Lankan Baila from Guinn Ragel and Indian Idol stars Nasha-E-Sangeet](#). For those who love to participate there is "Masala Idol" Crowd Karaoke, a free Bollywood dancing workshop and an all levels yoga class on the main lawn.

Fans attending the day will be treated to a feast of entertainment and interactive fun including the **Milo Cricket Zone** which will be run by [Cricket NSW](#) from 10am till 2pm aimed at teaching young children (5-8) through the **Milo Have a Go Program** and a junior development program for young girls (10-13) through the **Cric Hit** modified cricket program. For the child, teen and adult **Fast Bowlers of Sydney**, the moment of truth has arrived in the **Milo Cricket Zone** where quicks of all age groups will go head to head in the **Milo Speedgun Challenge** with prizes for the fastest bowler in each age category. For the more **serious players**, the Kingsgrove Cricket Academy will be running personalised batting technique clinics using the bowling machine.

SBS have agreed to film the Event and feature it in an episode of the upcoming second season of "[HERE COMES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD](#)" to be aired in June 2006 and hosted by Pria Viswalingam so make some noise, paint your face, bring your instruments and you could be discovered!.

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**Info :** For more information see [www.cricketmasala.com.au](http://www.cricketmasala.com.au) or contact Patrick Skene on 0405 406 088 or email [info@cricketmasala.com.au](mailto:info@cricketmasala.com.au)

**Media :** For Accreditation and a CD of cleared images please email [info@cricketmasala.com.au](mailto:info@cricketmasala.com.au)

