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“San Miguel” Chiang Mai International Cricket Sixes

The 22nd annual Chiang Mai International Cricket Sixes tournament www.chiangmaisixes.com will run from Sunday 29 March to Saturday 4 April, 2009 at the beautiful and picturesque Chiangmai Gymkhana Club, Thailand's oldest sports club which dates back to 1898. The event promises to be as good as ever and despite the economic crunch has attracted a keen and competitive range of teams from all over the world. Sixes cricket is fast and furious (as are some of the players after getting out!!) and despite all the fun the standards and quality of play are very high indeed – many world famous international cricketers have played in the Chiang Mai Sixes and loved it and come back again for more. You don't need to be a cricket fan to enjoy sixes cricket and, whether or not you do actually understand the delights of being “out” when you are “in”, you will love the atmosphere and camaraderie that has made the event so popular and made people return year after year. Cricket is of course a game played mainly by men (or at least those who think they are men!!), but the Chiang Mai Sixes has seen an increasing number of ladies playing cricket and in addition to watching all the boys, there will also be chances to see the girls in action.

In a message from Abhisit Vejjajiva Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency welcomes the visitors to Thailand and said *“I am especially pleased to hear about the efforts you are making, along with the Asian Cricket Council, to develop children's cricket in Thailand, and I believe that several thousand Thai school children have already discovered the joys of playing the game. This is particularly relevant considering that cricket will be an official sport at the 16th Asian Games being held in Guangzhou China in November of next year.”*

San Miguel Beer (Thailand) are again the official tournament sponsor as part of their recognition of the growing popularity of cricket in Thailand. Not only are San Miguel the sponsors of the “San Miguel” Chiang Mai International Cricket Sixes, but they are also actively planning sponsorship of ground floor cricket development for ethnic Thai children through the Sixes administration and new products coming on to the Thai market. With cricket to be an official sport at the Asian Games in 2010, Thai cricketers will welcome and be encouraged by the gracious support of San Miguel.

For 1 week, 32 men's teams and 3 women's teams from some 13 countries around the world will meet to play cricket and enjoy the warm welcome and unique hospitality and charm that Chiang Mai provides to its visitors. The sounds of willow bats striking rock-hard leather cricket balls, the cries of “Howzat!” as players are out, and the pleasure of a cold drink (or two or three!!) in the late March/early April hot season sun will be enjoyed by everyone who attends.

For those who are not familiar with the lively and action-filled Sixes version of cricket, it is a fast, much-shortened form of the one day game, and the short format produces an intensity of play that even first-time viewers can enjoy - it's not quite Twenty Twenty and the money is maybe a little less (!!), but the excitement can be just the same. In a recent final match, 10 runs were needed to win from 2 balls left, and amazingly the team got just that - 4 runs from the penultimate ball and then a wonderful strike over the boundary (which nearly hit the press tent and the writer of this article!!) to score a match-winning 6 runs. Each team fields 6 players, and the batsmen face a total of 30 balls (5 overs of 6 balls each). Run totals have exceeded 120 runs from 5 overs, which is prodigious batting! Of course, with the entire fielding side being only 6 players, there is a lot of open field to hit into, and lots of ball-chasing from fielders, but that is all part of the excitement as the 2 teams struggle for dominance.

Each day's cricket will commence at 9.00am and up to 15 matches are scheduled each day before drawing of stumps around dusk. The fact that up to 15 games will be played per day gives you an idea of how fast and furious the action will be. While cricket is the main theme and topic, fun and socialising are also high on the agenda.

Team entrants are from 13 different countries for this year's tournament; Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, England, Greece, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, UAE, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. Individual players come from a number of other countries, including India, Sri Lanka, the USA, and Belgium, to name just a few. A number of local Thai cricketers who learned to play in the junior cricket programme in Chiang Mai will be playing, and one of the men's teams is an all-Thai side from Chiang Mai's development programme. The week also includes a match on Friday for the "Old Crocks" (veterans), in which players are theoretically over 65 years of age - theoretical because there are some cheats (so desperate are they to win a match in the Sixes) that slip through the nets - pardon the pun - who are actually younger than 65 but qualify because they look older than 65!! A number of notable players with international experience are usually on hand and playing with some of the teams, so who knows what cricket star you might see?

Once again this year, every day of the Chiang Mai Sixes will be broadcast in both audio and video formats. This year the video broadcast will be television resolution (640 x 480) in Flash Video format, so all the action can be seen around the world. Full details of the broadcasts and other details of the tournament can be found on the Sixes website at www.chiangmaisixes.com

In order to encourage the development of cricket in Thailand, a simplified version of cricket was introduced to Chiang Mai schools some years ago. It is called "Sawasdee Cricket" and the juniors will have their own tournament, competing for the Sixes Sawasdee Cricket Cup, from the 2nd - 3rd April. They will be playing on a field adjacent to the main pitch and it is marvellous how these young Thais have taken to playing cricket! It is a sight to gladden the eyes to see these children enjoying the game so much and so enthusiastically, and all who attend the Sixes are encouraged to go and watch these youngsters in action and to give them some support. Some of the first players from Chiang Mai have now graduated to playing

the hard ball game and now represent Thailand in junior international matches. Perhaps we will see some of them play in the Asian Games!

Ladies are not left out. This year we will again have 3 teams competing for the tournament crown. Returning champions Thai Angels will be the favourites, but the Chiang Mai Chassies, and the AA Pixies will all try their best to unseat the Angels. The 3 teams will use the "Sawasdee" field in 3 days of round robin competition to decide the best 2 for the finals on the main field on Saturday 4th April.

So now is the time to dust off that old cricket cap and blazer and get along to the Chiang Mai International Cricket Sixes. There will be lots of action-packed cricket, lots of fun and a major measure of friendly socializing!

The Chiangmai Gymkhana Club is situated across the river from central Chiang Mai on the old Chiang Mai-Lamphun Road just north of Nong Hoy Market (before the Holiday Inn Hotel) and is an easy tuk-tuk or songthaew ride from any part of Chiang Mai. Admission to the beautiful, spacious grounds of the Gymkhana Club is free and there is ample, shaded seating for cricket spectators. Dominating the Chiangmai Gymkhana clubhouse is probably one of the most amazing old trees in Thailand. As always, there will a wide variety of food and drink on sale, including extra-cold San Miguel beer, and other beverages will be available from the "Boundary Bar" which is located in the heart of the action (and protected by nets from errant cricket balls!!). The Sixes is sure to be a fun-filled 7 days and a big crowd puller for residents of Chiang Mai and visitors to our northern city.

To Get There: Gymkhana Club, Raj Uthit Rd, trisection on Lamphun Rd., Tel 053-241 035 www.chiangmaisixes.com

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Sample photos from the 2008 Chiang Mai International Cricket Sixes and the 2008 Sawasdee Cricket Cup junior tournament:









THAI ANGELS
LADIES CHAMPIONS 2008



Chol Phratan Phateak
Sawasdee Cup Winners 2008 2008 4 4