

# Ian who? is making big name for himself

By Tom MacLeod

**HE'S coached Dhaka Gladiators to successive Bangladesh Premier Leagues, wrote the book on fast bowling and even pitched for the Philadelphia Phillies – but there's a chance you've never heard of Ian Pont.**

By his own admission the 51-year-old was an 'average' county seamer for Essex but the past three decades have seen Pont dabble as a pitcher, radio host, author and javelin thrower.

In his most recent incarnation as coach of Chris Gayle, Owais Shah and Luke Wright, Pont is set to be a rare English face at this summer's Champions League in India having guided the Gladiators to back-to-back BPL titles earlier this year.

A well-respected bowling coach with Essex and the Netherlands – Pont's *The Fast Bowler's Bible* was published in 2006 – he has been brought in on occasion by England.

And while the role of county coach in his homeland isn't on his immediate agenda, Pont admits he's never been afraid of dipping his toe in unfamiliar waters.

"I was a very average county cricketer and don't have a massively high profile as an international head coach," said Pont, whose baseball career saw

him trial with the New York Yankees, play an exhibition game for the Phillies and pursue the sport in England and Australia.

"Hopefully people view me as a high-class bowling coach but as a head coach it's a totally different field.

"So to have the opportunity to go to the Champions League with a decent squad, if we can retain them, is a fantastic chance to see what I can do.

"There aren't many coaches who are able to do what I do. If you were head coach of a country

you wouldn't necessarily get time off to go to the IPL or the Big Bash.

"T20 cricket doesn't sit very well with being an international standard county coach.

"A head coaching role at a county isn't something I'd pursue but then again my door is open. So if anyone approached me I'd always listen."

Despite his globetrotting antics Pont still retains ties with his home county Essex and has run the Mavericks Cricket Institute for the past two decades in

Halstead, Essex. Having worked with Shoaib Akhtar and Darren Gough at the Institute, Pont has pedigree when it comes to coaching fast bowlers but he believes it is his understanding of how to nurture up-and-coming talent that has been integral to his success with some of the world's finest t20 players.

"What suits me well is t20 cricket, franchise-based, with a limited time period," added Pont, whose side beat the Chittagong Kings by 43 runs to win the 2013 BPL in February.

"I run the Mavericks Cricket Institute and have done so for 20 years.

"That is my full time job – coaching 11-23 year olds, internationals and first class players. I'm very happy to continue developing talent and taking on the head coach role in a franchise based environment as it's over a short period of time and a project.

"I thought before the BPL that the side which blended the local players the best would be the strongest team. We had Chris Gayle come in for the semi-final, Kieron Pollard arrived, Luke Wright and Owais Shah too.

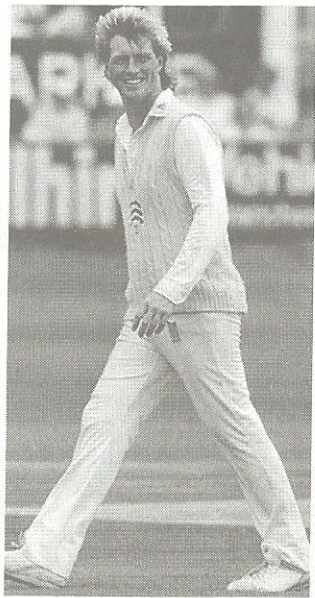
"No-one was in awe of anyone else except when you saw Chris Gayle actually lift his bat – we were in awe that he could actually pick it up!

"But other sides also had good players so it wasn't just about having big names.

"This was about how your local players performed along with most of the team. In that respect Shakib Al Hasan was player of the tournament – he won the car!

"It's easy when you win but I can assure you there are lots of ups and downs at the BPL and my job was to keep everyone focused on the cricket.

"I'm just thrilled to be jogging along with it all to be honest. As long as we're doing well, I'm enjoying it and the players respond then great."



**Multi-talented:** Pont as a bowler with Essex, playing baseball for Philadelphia Phillies and as the Dhaka Gladiators coach with the BPL trophy