

News monitored for: Pepsi - Brands

# Delhi Times

## I THOUGHT CRICKET WAS VERY LONG!

Didier Droghba was in Delhi for an exhibition match, tackling questions on racism, cricket, and, of course, soccer



Droghba with the Delhi team

Caroline D'Cruz

**C**helsea's iconic centre forward, Didier Droghba, is on a mission – to bring to football the same kind of attention and worship that cricket draws in India. On his maiden visit to the country and fresh out of a Champions League win, the footballer tackled questions after arriving three hours late for his first press conference in India on Sunday, starting with a Namaste and an apology. Excerpts:

### INDIA IS HOT... PHEW!

It is really hot here. I came here straight from the airport and I'm glad there wasn't much traffic, but I apologise for the delay. I am really excited to be here, it is my first time and I can't wait to meet my fans here."

**LEFT CHELSEA, WHAT NEXT?**

After the Champions League win, I took my decision to leave Chelsea. I took my time to make up my mind, because it was important for me to feel what I did for Chelsea. Now that I have left, I feel it was the right time to do so. The eight years that I've been with Chelsea were the greatest; it was the one club that I stuck with for so long. I think I've built a special relationship with the fans and the next step will be an interesting one, but I'd like to wait, and think about what's next.

### RACISM IS A STUPID TREND

Unfortunately, we'll never stop hearing about racist people. Football is a social sport and we unite a lot of people from different cultures, just like cricket does in India. I think people who are part of football know that racism exists. We should eradicate this stupid trend. It is those people who are racist who know nothing about life.

### I DON'T REMEMBER THE NAMES OF INDIAN CRICKETERS

It took me some time to understand cricket, and I admit that at first, I thought it was very long! Some players explained it to me and I understood then. I congratulate the Indian team on winning the last World Cup; I know what it feels like to win. It feels great. I don't really remember the names of the Indian cricketers. The captain's name is especially hard to pronounce. I was watching a cricket match some time back and it was a very good match, but unfortunately, I couldn't identify the players.

### MY KIDS PLAY CRICKET IN SCHOOL

I know cricket is the number one sport in this country; and purists might disagree with this new format of gaming, but football is number one in Africa and Europe, and slowly it will be big competition for cricket (in India). There has to be some support system at the grassroots, and football needs the same spotlight as cricket. My kids play cricket in school. I won't force them to play football, they can play cricket if they like. They're doing it in school already, and I think they like it.

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WHO'LL GET THE BALL? Bhaji and Ranbir

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Pics: Ranjit Kumar



## DESI BOYS VS DROGBA

**Virat Kohli turns goalkeeper for Bhutia's team**



**GAME ON:** On a scorching Sunday afternoon, a crowd of a thousand-odd Delhiites gathered at the Thyagraj stadium for a one-of-a-kind match – a T20 football match with a format that merges cricket and football and is played in a cage. The highlight was that footballer Didier Drogba, Chelsea's fourth highest goal scorer of all time, was in the capital for this match. Eight amateur teams from across the country battled it out for an opportunity to be coached by Drogba, and in the end the Delhi team stood victorious.



**CELEBRITIES GALORE:** The crowd went into a frenzy as celebrity after celebrity – Ranbir Kapoor, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Harbhajan Singh, Baichung Bhutia, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Nikhil Chinapa and Murali Vijay – poured in to play the exhibition match at the end of the tournament. Ranbir played with the Delhi team, which was coached by Drogba. The Indian cricketers formed the opposing team with Baichung acting as coach. Amid mad cheering and applause, both the coaches even stepped into the cage to play before half time. Both teams squared the match at 10 goals each, but Bhutia and his team beat Drogba's team after they took the game away during the penalty kicks. Ranbir scored for Delhi, but both Raina and Murali scored a penalty each for Bhutia's team.

Caroline D'Cruz

**Didier Drogba**



**Baichung, despite being the coach, took to the field for a while before half time**



**MERI BHI PHOTO LE NA!**

**It wasn't just the *aam janta* that was excited to see Drogba. We spotted Bhajji clicking Ranbir with Drogba, and then Ranbir returning the favour. Later, while Ranbir and Bhajji were busy looking at the pictures, Dhoni and company were doing a little jig of their own**



**Ranbir Kapoor and Nikhil Chinapa meet the Bangalore team, which was defeated by the Delhi team in the semifinals**



**HAVING A FIELD DAY: Dhoni and Drogba**



**Baichung Bhutia and Drogba**