

FRUITS OF SUCCESS

England calling for Jolly good Rovers showing

Sanjay Rajan TNN

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Chennai: Their promoters Chemplast, for their dominant performances this season, have rewarded premier first division league side Jolly Rovers with a 15-day exposure trip to England in May.

Rovers won the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association first division league championship, finished runners-up in the TNCA-VA Parthasarathy Trophy limited-over tournament and subsequently went on to become the first Chennai team to bag the prestigious BCCI Corporate Trophy limited-overs tournament, which carries a winner's cheque of Rs 1 crore. The boys will be playing eight to 10 matches primarily in Essex and Staffordshire, Bharath Reddy, former India stumper and head of cricket operations at Chemplast, told TOI on Monday.

England was our obvious choice given the country's cricket history and moreover our chairman N Sankar wanted the boys to learn from the professionalism that comes from touring and playing in England, said 58-year-old Reddy, who toured England with the Indian Test team in 1979. The quality of club cricket might not be as good as what it was in the past but you still get to see the lone professional take his side through.

There is also the experience and exposure of traveling in England, the etiquette aspect which certainly will help when the boys travel abroad in future. L Balaji and S Badrinath (Test cricketers both) certainly benefited from the exposure when they toured England with the Chemplast team in 2007.

Under the captaincy of C Hemant Kumar, and with Test batsman M Vijay in the line-up, Rovers went on to beat Vijay CC in the league final, finished runners-up behind Globe Trotters in the VA Parthasarathy Trophy, and pipped India Cements in BCCI Corporate Trophy that featured an all-Chennai final. It was Rovers third first division championship in the last five years.

We were to go to England after we won the first division crown twice in succession three seasons ago, but were left with little time with the next season beginning almost immediately, said Reddy. With the city league also very competitive, it has also become very difficult to hold on to players. This is a token of appreciation to the players and the support staff coach Jaykumar, physiotherapist Shyam Sundar and physical trainer Dhanasekar for their superlative team effort.