

Mixed bag on manager

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The cricket fraternity expressed a guarded reaction over the appointment of Lt Col (retired) MA Latif as manager of Bangladesh team on Sunday.

Termining Latif's induction as a 'bad' move by the Board, many critics vented their anger at the selection of a manager having no playing experience at any level of the game.

They felt that an ex-cricketer or an organiser should have been ideal for the job.

Former Bangladesh captain and manager Gazi Ashraf Hossain thought it would have been better had the Board utilised the former DG of BKSP (Bangladesh Krira Shiksha Protisthan) in some other capacities related to the development of the game.

"I was totally shocked to know that Faruque (Ahmed) and Athar (Ali Khan) were ignored for the job. This is beyond my understanding what could be the reason to choose Col Latif for this

particular affair," said Ashraf.

"I respect Col Latif as former BKSP DG. He was a good administrator. But making him manager of Bangladesh team might prove to be a wrong decision. It's not a very wise decision I would say. He should be given some responsibility in the game's development," Ashraf added.

He also criticised the Board for the way it handled the case of Faruque Ahmed and Athar Ali Khan. The Board recently asked the two to manage two

different national selections as a test case and then abandoned them for no good reason.

Former Bangladesh cricketer and coach Dipu Rai Choudhury, however, smelled a rat in the whole affair.

"There is an inquiry going on in the Board over Bangladesh's disgraceful performance in the World Cup. I think, this appointment is linked to the course of the inquiry," said Dipu while talking to The Daily Star Sport last evening.

"The probe committee must have

informed the Board that the team lacked discipline and the Board subsequently took steps to restore it.

"I know him as a good administrator. Maybe his administrative reputation came into the Board's consideration to get the team in order.

"I still believe that a former cricketer is the best choice for such jobs, and either Faruque or Athar would have been a better choice," said the left-arm seamer of seventies and eighties.

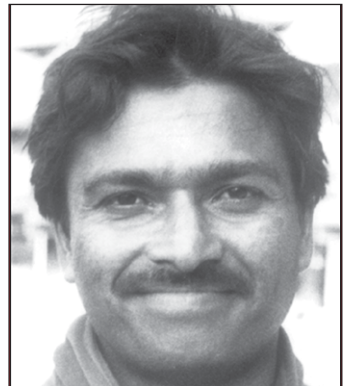
Faruque Ahmed meanwhile appeared not to be perturbed with this event. The former national captain said that he never thought himself as a contender for the post of manager. He also considered his appointment as manager of the BCB Red in two practice games a separate incident.

"I had not heard anything from the Board that I was a contender for the post. But had the responsibility been entrusted with me I would have taken up the challenge gleefully," said Faruque.

He observed that the Board might have picked Col. Latif purely



GAZI ASHRAF HOSSAIN



FARUQUE AHMED

Super League Rain ruins Day Two

SPORTS REPORTER

Rain washed out the second day of the two GrameenPhone Super League cricket matches at different venues yesterday.

At the BKSP ground in Savar, defending champions Victoria Sporting Club are playing against Brothers Union Club while City Club are facing Uttara Sporting Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Rain had prevented any play after lunch on Day One also.

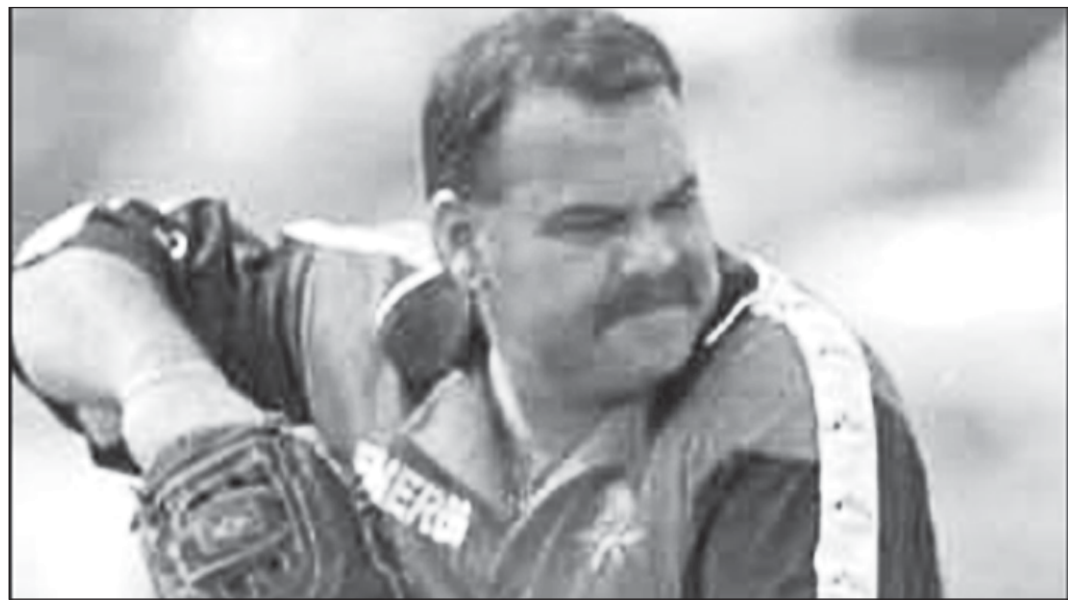
Rajib takes the lead

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib led the table with 4.5 points after the fifth round games in the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Championship at the NSC chess room yesterday.

Grand Master Niaz Murshed and International Master Reefat bin Sattar were jointly in the second position with 4 points each.

In the day's matches, Niaz beat



DAV WHATMORE

Whatmore sacked

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket chiefs on Monday sacked national coach Dav Whatmore, saying they were looking for a replacement to inject "fresh thinking" into the team.

Whatmore, a Sri Lankan-born Australian, was in his second spell with the team, after masterminding their World Cup triumph in 1996.

Seven years later, the side reached the semi-final stage before being

Australia.

But cricket bosses here decided they will not renew his contract.

"Whatmore has been with the team for a long time and what we feel is that there should be fresh thinking," said Anura Tennekoon, chief executive of the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka.

Tennekoon said they were already looking for a new face to replace Whatmore, whose contract ends in May.

Whatmore declined to comment on the announcement, saying he would issue a statement after the April 3-10 Sharjah Cup.

The national team's long-time physiotherapist, Alex Kontouri, will also

be replaced next month, Tennekoon said.

The five-member selection committee has been revamped with the addition of the recently retired Aravinda de Silva.

Captain Sanath Jayasuriya had also tendered his resignation after the World Cup, but it was rejected by Sports Minister Johnston Fernando.

Jayasuriya and Whatmore will continue to be in charge of the team for the Sharjah Cup against Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Kenya from April 1-10 and the subsequent home series against New Zealand from April 25.

SL selectors justify Sharjah choices

Cricket

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's selectors defended their side for the forthcoming Sharjah Cup on Monday after the initial squad, which left out off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, was rejected by the sports ministry.

Aravinda de Silva, who retired after the World Cup and joined the selection panel, said it was thought Muralitharan needed a rest because of a groin injury but that it was later decided the side could benefit from his presence.

"We needed to strengthen the

bowling so the targets set won't be too intimidating for the youngsters," De Silva told a news conference.

Batsmen Mahela Jayawardene and Russel Arnold, and fast bowler Pulasthi Gunaratne were also dropped from the squad, but De Silva said he had high hopes for Jayawardene despite his poor World Cup.

"He will be in the side definitely for the next series. I felt he needed a break. I reckon he's the best player we've got. In the next 10 years -- he will be a better batsman than I was," said De Silva, who scored 6,361 runs in Test cricket and is the third highest run-scorer in one-day history.

"We left him out of this tour just to

get his mind out of the game and be fresh for New Zealand."

New Zealand and Sri Lanka will play a Test series later in April.

The selectors were still unclear as to whether Sanath Jayasuriya would step down as captain after the Sharjah tournament. He tried to resign after the World Cup but was asked to remain by the sports ministry.

"He has indicated he does not want to continue," De Silva said.

The Sharjah Cup, which was revamped because of the war in Iraq into a four-team tournament with Sri Lanka, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Pakistan, will take place from April 3 to 10.

Carlos staying cool

Football

INTERNET, Madrid

Roberto Carlos has denied making an assault on the referee during Brazil's defeat to Portugal on Saturday.

The Real Madrid fullback was sent off in the 82nd minute of the surprise 2-1 defeat in the friendly international for apparently shoulder charging the Israeli referee Alon Yefet.

He was protesting over the award of a freekick to Portugal.

Reports in Spain have suggested Carlos could be given a worldwide ban, which would prevent him playing for Real as well as for Brazil.

But the left-footed player himself is confident he will escape any such censure.

"I didn't see it as an act of aggression," he told Spanish newspaper Marca on Monday.

"Like a lot of players, I was saying to the referee that the free-kick looked a bit harsh.

"It may have been that I was a bit heated but I never went to push him or to head-but him.

"I've never attacked anyone, whether a rival player or a referee, in any game I've played.

"Those who know me know that I respect fair play. I've been around long enough to know what's an act of aggression."

On the possibility of suspension from FIFA, he added: "I'm calm and I'm confident this won't be turned into a big drama."

Fifa have so far not commented



ROBERTO CARLOS

WI set to name team bosses

REUTERS, Bridgetown

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) will announce a captain, manager and coach on Monday to take charge of the side for the home series against Australia and Sri Lanka, officials said on Sunday.

A news conference has been called for 1600 GMT to "update the public on decisions taken at the directors' meeting in Barbados on Sunday where appointments for the posts of coach, captain, vice-captain and manager for the senior West Indies team were considered," said a WICB statement.

All the posts became vacant following the World Cup in southern Africa, where Carl Hooper's West Indian team failed to advance beyond the first group stage of the competition.

The WICB has already held interviews for the manager and coach jobs, which had been held by Ricky Skerritt and Roger Harper.

A selection panel, headed by Viv Richards, made suggestions about who should be captain and vice-captain and put these to the board at a meeting in Barbados last Sunday.

They will play a four-Test series with Australia starting on April 10 and two Tests against Sri Lanka beginning on June 20

Wright's contract extended

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India on Monday extended cricket coach John Wright's contract for two months following the team's impressive performance in the recent World Cup in South Africa.

Cricket board sources said the decision to extend Wright's contract had been taken on an ad hoc basis in view of an upcoming triangular one-day series in Bangladesh.

India, who finished runners-up to Australia in the World Cup, will take part in the April 11-20 tri-series in Dhaka against South Africa and Bangladesh.

There is no international cricket scheduled for the Indian team after that until the home Test series against New Zealand in October.

The Indian team for the Dhaka tri-series will be selected on Wednesday amid speculation that senior players like Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble and Javagal Srinath may be rested.

"We are aware that some of the players are carrying injuries and may not be fully fit for the tournament," said cricket board secretary Karunakaran Nair.

Tendulkar, voted the player of the World Cup for a record aggregate of 673 runs, and Dravid are both nursing finger injuries.

Wright's three-year term as coach was due to end after the World Cup, but the former New Zealand captain had expressed his desire to continue if the Indian board agreed to renew his contract.

"I have always enjoyed working with the Indian team. It has been a very good experience," Wright had said when leaving for New Zealand after India's World Cup campaign.

Though India lost to Australia by 125 runs in the one-sided World Cup final at Johannesburg on March 23, they have been performing consistently well since Wright took over as coach in 2000.

The most memorable moment came in 2001, when Saurav Ganguly's Indians stunned formidable Australia in a three-Test home

SEE PAGE 9



JOHN WRIGHT

Beckham's demand

AFP, Hexham

England skipper David Beckham has warned his team-mates that nothing less than a win will do in Wednesday's Euro 2004 qualifying crunch with Turkey.

Beckham was England's best player in Saturday's 2-0 win over Liechtenstein but he admitted Turkey would demand a much more convincing display from his side.

"We are going to have to step it up but I think we will do so. Saturday was all about being professional and getting back to winning ways.

"They had more opportunities than we would have liked them to have had but we stuck ours away and they didn't. That's football.

"Now we go on to Wednesday and people were always going to say that England-Turkey was the big one. You have to be hyped up for that game - and we will be.

Waugh boost for Gilchrist

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia's Test captain Steve Waugh will shake any hint of complacency from the team on the forthcoming four-Test tour of the West Indies, wicketkeeper-batsman Adam Gilchrist said on Monday.

Waugh was overlooked for Australia's recent World Cup triumph in southern Africa, where the side was led by Ricky Ponting, and he has spent the past two months leading New South Wales to the four-day championship and one-day domestic double.

"Test cricket, it's a new challenge and obviously a different captain in charge," Gilchrist said in an interview on

Australian television as the Test squad prepared to fly out of Sydney for the Caribbean on Monday.

"That captain in Steve Waugh obviously doesn't take to being complacent very well. He'll be demanding the best from us.

"It's a big thrill for all of us to know that he's committed to play on," added Gilchrist in a reference to the decision announced by 37-year-old Waugh earlier this month.

Waugh equalled his former captain Allan Border's world record of 156 Test appearances when he led Australia in the fifth Ashes Test against England in Sydney in January.

The gritty right-hander made a century in the match to equal Don Bradman's national record of 29 hundreds. He also joined Border and India's Sunil Gavaskar as the only players to score 10,000 Test runs as Australia won the series 4-1.

Waugh said on Monday that motivation would not be a problem for the weary Australians because Test cricket was special.

"The accolades and glory will last for quite a while longer for the deserving members of the World Cup squad," said Waugh, who captained Australia to victory in the 1999 final against Pakistan.

"But they all know that their places in the Test team are closely contested and any sign of complacency will end in the results

SEE PAGE 9



ADAM GILCHRIST

Target top spot Aussies off to Caribbean

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia, with Steve Waugh back at the helm, left here on Monday for the West Indies needing victory in the four-Test series to reclaim the number one Test nation ranking.

In a quirk of the International Cricket Council's rating system the South Africans hold the mantle despite a shelling from the Australians in their last two Test tour encounters, but Waugh offered no excuses.

"Unless we win this series we will remain the number two side so there is a lot to play for," Waugh said at Sydney airport.

"People expect us just to turn up and beat the West Indies -- it is not going to be the case. It is a tough tour to be on, but enjoyable."

Waugh admitted the number one ranking was something he mulled over throughout the Australian domestic season while leading New South Wales

to both the first-class and one-day titles, but admitted he was probably the only one who had.

SEE PAGE 9



STEVE WAUGH

Counting on Windies

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, London

Former West Indies batsman Larry Gomes thinks the current crop of stars will put up a good fight in the forthcoming series against Australia.

Gomes predicts a close result, similar to the last time the sides met in the Caribbean in 1999, when the Test series ended in a thrilling 2-2 draw.

Brian Lara almost single-handedly held Australia at bay then, and Gomes believes that the Windies will need him to be at his prolific best again.

And he sees a thin bowling attack as a

potential Achilles heel for the West Indies.

"Playing here at home in the West Indies we always put up a great fight whoever we are playing against. We seem to play better at home," Gomes told the BBC Sport website.

"I think it will be a close series even though Australia are the number one team in the world right now. It will be very hard-fought with a close result like last time.

"The West Indies are on the upswing, but a lot will also depend on Lara. If he plays well then the team does well.

"The batting department looks good with Ramnaresh Sarwan, Marlon Samuels, Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Carl Hooper - if he stays on.

"We should be able to put enough runs on the board, but our bowling attack looks a bit thin on paper. We don't look as though we can bowl out other teams twice.

"I think the matches in Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica should produce a result."

Gomes enjoyed a prolific record against Australia, scoring six of his nine Test centuries against them.

His 1,122 runs at an average of 56.10 in 13 matches against Australia easily eclipses a career total of 3,171 at 39.63 in 60 Tests.

He offered an insight into how the home side can break the psychological hold posed by the world

SEE PAGE 9