

Azhar loses battle

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin has suffered an important setback in his fight to overturn a life ban from cricket.

Azharuddin was banned by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) three years ago after a match-fixing inquiry carried out by the Delhi-based Central Bureau of Investigation.

But his legal team challenged the decision, arguing that the BCCI was not empowered to appoint a commission of inquiry.

The case has gone on for over two-and-a-half years with Azharuddin's counsel arguing that the CBI's investigative methods had been "malicious, illegal and arbitrary and biased in favour of the BCCI".

But lawyer T Jagdish confirmed that their action has been rejected and they would now take the matter to a higher court.

Azharuddin, now 40, was just one short of 100 Test appearances when he was banned.

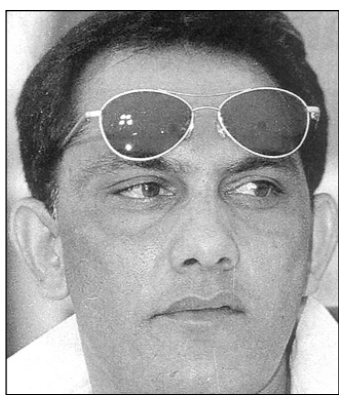
He scored 6,215 Test runs and remains one-day cricketer's second-highest scorer after teammate Sachin Tendulkar with 9,378 runs from 334 matches.

Two years ago, he told a magazine: "Match-fixing simply cannot be

a one-man show. This is a game which involves 11 players. If a team fails, it is spectacularly unfair to single out just one person.

"What I am trying to say is that unless the entire team is part of the conspiracy, match-fixing cannot take place. There cannot be any foul play on the part of a single person."

Ajay Sharma also received a life



MOHAMMAD AZHARUDDIN

ban in the wake of the CBI inquiry, while Ajay Jadeja and Manoj Prabhakar were handed five-year suspensions.

Jadeja also took legal action to clear his name and his ban was overturned in January.

He has already begun playing again in the hope of one day making a comeback for the national team.

Ganguly gets it Wright

Cricket

CRICINFO, Bangalore

Coach John Wright and captain Saurav Ganguly have both expressed their satisfaction with the way the Indian squad is shaping up prior to the start of the new season, with the Challenger Trophy commencing in the second week of September.

The probabilities for the Indian squad have just finished a two-week camp in Bangalore, and both Wright and Ganguly were pleased at the way it went.

"It's been a very good camp," said Wright.

"We have seen a definite rise in the training attitude and standards of the boys. Greg [King, the new fitness trainer] has done a tremendous job. He's fitted in well and the boys got to know him well while Andrew [Leipus, the physiotherapist] has carried on his excellent work."

"Players came here with certain levels of fitness," continued Wright. "After the camp some are fit and some needed to be fitter. Everyone has improved during the camp, which has been very good."

Ganguly endorsed Wright's comments, saying: "It has been a hot camp and we are a little tired.

But our fitness standard has gone up enormously. As a captain it is very satisfying to see the side getting fitter and fitter. Now, we are much fitter than at the beginning of this camp.

"The boys realise the importance of fitness," he continued. "They know what is required to remain fit. At the end of the day, there are two different skills [fitness and cricketing skill], but one helps the other. Once we start the camp to hone our cricketing skills, this camp will help immensely in improving the standard of their game."

Ganguly pointed out that the probabilities who were not part of the current national side had a lot to play for in the coming weeks. "Obviously, one or two slots [in the Indian team] are open. Let us wait and see how the boys play in the Challenger, Irani Trophy and the side games against New Zealand."

Rahul Dravid, Yuvraj Singh and Mohammad Kaif missed out on the camp as they were playing county cricket in England.

Wright wasn't worried about them, though.

"Dravid has always been a conscientious trainer and the other two, as I hear, too, were training hard. If they have any problem," Wright said, pointing towards King, "we have the man here to sort it out."

Referring to the reports that Harbhajan Singh was not playing in

the Challenger Trophy because he was injured, Wright said, "I would like to clear that Harbhajan is not injured. After talking to [the selectors and Andrew we felt that the best way to deal with Harbhajan would be to introduce him to the season with the longer version of the game instead of going straight into the Challengers. He's okay and he'll be playing in the Irani Trophy."

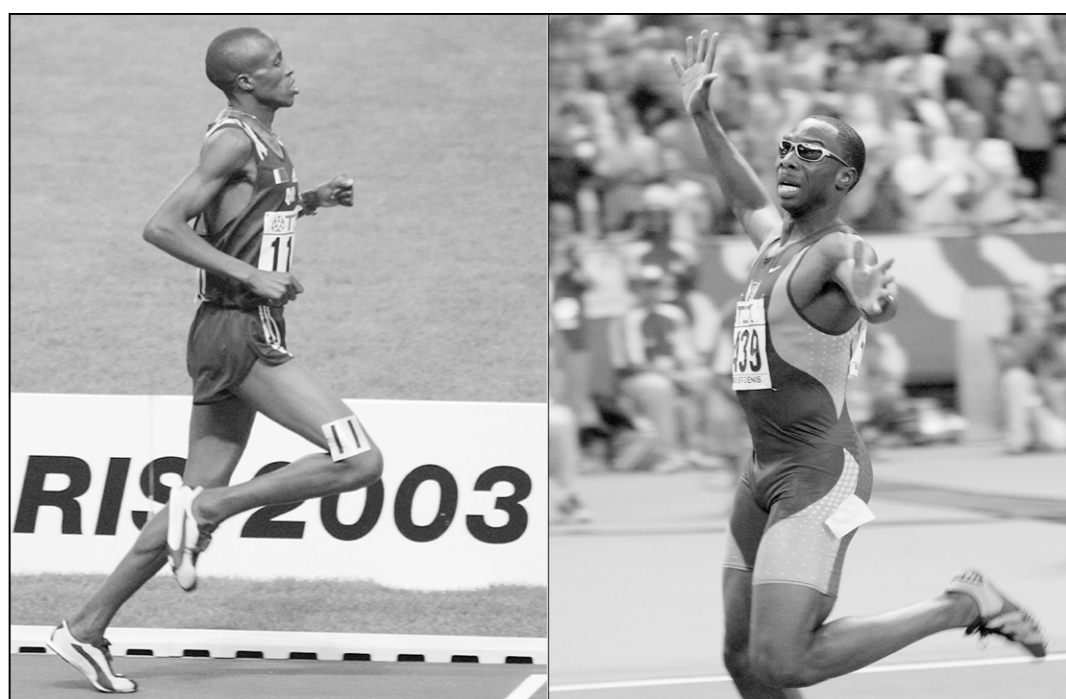
Virender Sehwag and Ashish Nehra are the other players from the camp who will not be playing in the Challenger Trophy.

Ganguly wasn't unduly worried, though.

"Injuries are part and parcel of the game," he said. "With the amount of cricket we play, injuries are bound to happen. They are as fit as anybody else and once they recover from injury it will not take much time to return to international cricket."

Leipus, meanwhile, said that both Sehwag and Nehra were recovering fast.

"Ashish has come after a surgery [on his ankle] and we've been monitoring his progress. Veeru has been told to rest six weeks that will be [until] the end of September. The Challenger Trophy is right after the preparatory camp and I didn't want to commit him to a team."



Saif Saeed Shaheen (L) of Qatar gets closer to the finishline on way to win the men's 3,000m steeplechase gold while American Jerome Young jumps for joy after winning the men's 400m gold at the 9th IAAF World Athletics Championships in Paris on Tuesday.

Adopted sons strike gold

Athletics

AFP, Paris

- the man nicknamed Batman was disqualified.

Jon Drummond brought a close to the fiasco he had created on Sunday, where he had refused to leave the track after being disqualified from his 100m quarterfinal, by saying he would not run in the 4x100m relay team and was ending his season.

Later Tuesday, the IAAF, the world governing body who had wanted the US track and field authorities to take disciplinary action against the sprinter, finally disqualified him from the championships.

Drummond's exile leaves the American team sorely missing his relay skills and their lack of resources took another jolt when world record holder Tim Montgomery decided to return home without even informing officials.

To make matters worse Olympic champion Maurice Greene is suffering a leg injury he picked up in the 100m semifinal.

However, one US official looked on the bright side.

"Frankly the ones who are in the reserves should have been in the team from the first place so badly are the others running," he told AFP. Ezekiel Kemboi probably put it best as to what he thought of Shaheen's title win in the steeplechase.

"He's still a Kenyan, he's always lived in Kenya and so it's like Kenya has won the gold medal," said the silver medalist.

Shaheen, who remembered not to cross himself when he went over the line as it would have caused some offence to Muslim Qatar, said he had no doubts about victory even though he raced shoulder to shoulder with his former countryman.

"I ran the first 2000 metres very fast," said Shaheen.

"I knew that at that point I could win the race. I let Kemboi catch up with me just to prove that I could beat him. I planned it like that."

Young fulfilled the promise that was evident when he burst onto the 400m scene in the mid-90s and revelled in at last taking the limelight that Michael Johnson had monopolised throughout the past decade.

"We played a part in some of Mike's greatest races so it is great to finally get the medals ourselves," said the 27-year-old.

"I have been in two world championships and not got a medal so I know what that is like."

"I think it was a learning experience then. Mike was like our teacher."

Another of Johnson's generation Gail Devers bowed out surprisingly in the 100m hurdles semifinals after clipping a hurdle and could not make it in as a fastest loser ruining her hopes of a fourth title.

However, two other women held their own to retain their titles as Maria Mutola and Russia's Tatyana Lebedeva won the 800m and triple jump respectively.

While the hosts celebrated a bronze in the 400m behind Young, through Marc Raquil, earlier they suffered two huge blows in five minutes as their top medal prospect in the men's pole vault Romain Mesnil and 100m hurdles semi-finalist Linda Ferga went out.

Mesnil failed in three attempts at 5.70 metres while Ferga was disqualified under the false start rule imposed this year which penalises the first person to make one after one has already been committed.

A tearful Ferga left the track without a protest - something perhaps Drummond now wishes he had done.

Younis ready to join Pakistan

REUTERS, Peshawar

Pakistan will be reinforced by the return of senior batsman Younis Khan for the third Test against Bangladesh in Multan.

Younis Khan had opted to miss the first two Tests, the second of which started on Wednesday, against Bangladesh due to family commitments.

"He has made himself available for selection from the third Test onwards," chief selector Aamir Sohail told this news agency on Wednesday. The third Test is due to start on September 3.

Pakistan won the first Test on the final day last Sunday by seven wickets.

Chang says goodbye

Tennis

AFP, New York

Michael Chang concluded his tennis career in much the same manner as he lived it for 16 years - finding joy in the struggle and triumph in the trying.

The 31-year-old Asian-American star retired here Tuesday after losing to 15th seed Fernando Gonzalez of Chile 6-3, 7-5, 5-7, 6-4 in a first-round match at the year's final Grand Slam tournament.

Despite never reaching the pinnacle of world number one and being unable to capture another Slam title after his 1989 French Open crown at age 17, Chang left the sport with a smile on his face and no regrets.

"If you walk away having regrets and not with a smile, something is not right," Chang said. "It's important to walk away feeling good whether you win or you lose."

"I wouldn't change a thing. You have your opportunities to win and you take them as best you can. Sometimes you come through, sometimes not. Unfortunately for me, that second Grand Slam never came."

"But the Lord blessed me with more than I ever imagined. I can walk away feeling good about it."

Just 18 hours after 14-time Grand Slam champion Pete Sampras was given a royal sendoff on the same Arthur Ashe Stadium court, 223rd-ranked Chang made a relatively low-key exit to a standing ovation after a 2-10 farewell season.

"Not every athlete gets an ovation like that," Chang said. "It's special. You learn people care about me. This year I've learned more about how much people care about me than the years I played on tour."

"After 16 years, it will be nice to unpack my bags." Chang defeated Sweden's Stefan Edberg in a thrilling five-set Roland Garros final 14 years ago to become the youngest men's Slam champion ever at 17 years and three months.

"The French Open brought out a certain characteristic in me that was already there," he said. "It gave me a tremendous amount of confidence

to go into any match knowing I was able to win. You go back to those memories and feed off that energy."

The defining match of Chang's career was a fourth-round, five-set win over then-number one Ivan Lendl on his way to that title. Cramps forced Chang to serve underhanded at one point in a duel that went four hours and 37 minutes.

"That match taught me a lot about life," Chang said. "As a person and player I have had to fight. Those kinds of matches remind me that to fight and not give up is a great thing."

"It would be nice to be remembered as a person who gave his best win or lose."

Failures dogged Chang. He peaked at second in the rankings in

1996 after losing the US Open final to Sampras. Chang's life might have been different had he won that day.

"I sometimes think about that," he said. "If I had won that match and I had become number one, I would have lost a little bit of drive."

"Even though I didn't win that match it helped get me through some difficult times. I learned a lot about myself and life," Chang said. "Those things developed characteristics in me as a person that will help me in the future."

Chang lost the 1996 US and Australian Open finals and in the semi-finals of both events in 1997. Chang never again reached the fourth round at a Slam, never wore that second Slam crown.



PHOTO: AFP

Michael Chang of the US gives thumbs up to his fans after the conclusion of his match against Fernando Gonzalez at the US Open on Tuesday. Chang announced his retirement after the loss.

PAKISTAN DIARY

FROM PAGE 13 minister came to the press box and met all the journalists including the six from Bangladesh.

When approached, the young politician from Khazana area in Peshawar said that cricket was his favourite game and he enjoyed watching matches whenever he got the chance.

"I was captain of my village team," he joked when this correspondent asked him whether he had played the game.

GRUMPY SOHAIL! Pakistan chief selector Aamir Sohail was visibly unhappy when confronted by local reporters of Peshawar during the tea break with Bangladesh comfortably placed on 166 for one.

When a reporter wanted to know why the pitch was not helping the home team, Sohail advised them to ask the curator. And when he was asked what strategy the Pakistan team was following in the second Test, Sohail replied: "why don't you talk to the Pakistan captain?"

The former Pakistan opener also declined to comment on why the home team's bowlers were struggling.

He was clearly irritated and suggested that in future, questions directed at him should be more relevant.

But when a reporter wanted to know why Wajahatullah Wasti was not being considered in the Pakistan team the chief selector was ducking again: "You should ask Wajahatullah and not me. He knows why he is not in the team."

Roddick, Agassi

FROM PAGE 13 what Roddick gave Henman.

"In Washington I made the mistake of giving him one pace," Roddick said. "I just mixed it up a little bit more. Maybe it was just execution."

Henman's only prior first-round exit here came in 1999. He reached the third round each of the past three years.

"He served very well," Henman said. "When you have a weapon like that and back it up with a strong forehand, it's a tough combination to beat."

"I needed to make something out of the second set and I wasn't able to. I felt my game was close to making life awkward for him. At one set all it's anyone's match. At 2-0, Andy's confidence is going only in one direction."

On the women's side, sixth seed Jennifer Capriati beat Spain's 105th-ranked Cristina Torrens Valero 6-0, 6-1 in 35 minutes.

"It was a pretty easy match," Capriati said. "I just wasn't challenged."

French Open winner Justine Henin-Hardenne, the second seed from Belgium, shook off fatigue and back pain to beat Hungary's Aniko Kapros 7-5, 6-3.

"There's a burning in my lower back," she said. "It's not disturbing me when I'm playing but when I'm on a chair or in the bed it's a problem. Last night it was very bad. I slept only three or four hours. I was very tired."

Henin-Hardenne has lost in the fourth round here the past three years but is playing well. "I'm feeling much more confident right now and you can see it in my serve," she said. "I served good on the important points."

Japan's Ai Sugiyama, seeded 11th, breezed past Spain's Conchita Granados 6-1, 6-0 in 44 minutes while Japan's 55th-ranked Shinobu Asagoe ousted 10th seed Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria 6-4, 6-3.

"I saw she was not moving quite well and I took advantage of that," said Asagoe, who ousted ninth-ranked Daniela Hantuchova out of Wimbledon in June.

Latif talks straight

FROM PAGE 13 England and had mixed fortunes. In Sri Lanka, we reached the final.

The rebuilding process is going on. We are still looking for some more new faces. Now with Bangladesh here it's a good opportunity to test them before we face South Africa next month. Four players made their debut in the first Test against Bangladesh. There might be couple of more when we play the third Test in Multan. Again we could see some more new faces in the one-day series. Our mission is to bracket around 15 players who could serve Pakistan in the long run.

DSS: As captain of the Pakistan team, you know Shoaib Akhtar very well, how difficult is it for you to handle the speedster?

RL: It's not a tough task to handle Shoaib. He is a different person now than what he was in the World Cup. He is fully aware that discipline is a basic requirement to be a member

of Pakistan team.

If you look back at the Karachi Test, you must have seen how serious he was though he was unlucky not to get a wicket. So, it shows the transformation in Shoaib. I think he is fully aware that he is not a special person anymore.

DSS: You have praised Bangladesh after the first Test which is unlike any other captain. We find there is a similarity between you and Steve Waugh for being straight about cricket matters.

RL: I always think about the game. I keep watching who is going out and coming in apart from Pakistan because it's good for the game.

If the Bangladesh captain says good thing that is very natural. But if I say the same thing the impact is different. Bangladesh will get better and that's what I want because helping them to become better is our responsibility too.

DSS: Pakistan have never won

against India in the World Cup. Do you think that Pakistan get more emotionally involved in those matches and eventually lose?

RL: We always start well but fail at the end. May be your right that we tend to get more emotional. On the other hand it's true that the Indians somehow stay calm on the field.

DSS: The Pakistan team is much talked about for the controversies surrounding it. What is the reason behind that?

RL: Let's put it like this, Pakistan have had many superstars in world cricket and that's why they are often in the spotlight.

DSS: How long you want to continue with international cricket?

RL: I have a contract with the Board until January 2004. After that they will say whether I'm needed any more or not. Of course, it also depends on my fitness also.

BCCI assures NZ tightest security

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

New Zealand's cricket team will be provided security of the "highest order" on their next month's tour of India following bomb blasts in Bombay, a top Indian board official said Tuesday.

"We'll not compromise on players' security," secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) SK Nair said a day after twin car bombings which killed at least 52 people in Bombay.

Nair said the New Zealand cricket board had yet to approach its Indian counterpart, but the hosts were prepared to ally any security fears.

"They may ask for our feedback

on security and we'll tell them they'll be provided security of the highest order. There'll be no compromise on that," he said.

Nair said the board had already issued strict directions to all the host associations to ensure trouble-free matches during the New Zealand tour and the subsequent triangular one-day series also involving Australia.

"We've given strict instructions to all the associations to follow our guidelines on security," he said, adding the board would not tolerate any crowd trouble such as that marred the West Indies tour of India last year.

"We will not adopt a soft approach at all. We will be very strict because even one incident can tarnish the country's image," said Nair.

Khulna College b'ball champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna College became champions in the First Europa College Basketball Championship with a 66-60 victory over Mastermind College at the Dhanmondi basketball gymnasium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 36-31. Sadeq scored 22 for the winners while Nabil caged highest 30 for the losers.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman distributed the prizes.

Woolmer

FROM PAGE 13 to Bangladesh is a part of his ICC assignment.

The cricket authority has already selected 33 young cricketers to take part in the batting and wicketkeeping course.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across, Down, and Cryptiquip.

Cryptiquip crossword puzzle with clues and solution.

Abahani 1st

FROM PAGE 13 a Mehedi Hasan Tapu header deflected off the cross bar.

In the 42nd minute, Tapu also wasted an easy chance. He had only Abahani custodian Titumir Chowdhury to beat, but his poor shot did not give an advancing Titumir any trouble.

TEAMS ABAHANI KC: Titumir Chowdhury, Nazrul Islam, Aminul Islam (Donald Ague), Amit Khan Shuvro, Jahangir Alam Mintoo, Rezaul Karim Liton, Pranatosh, Asad (Mustafa Anwar Parvez), Sandro Pedrosa, Saiful Islam Khokon, and Arcadia Toe (Maksudul Alam Bulbul).