

NAT'L FOOTBALL C'SHIP Rajbari, Magura move forward

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajbari moved into the zonal semi-finals after edging past Munshiganj in the Jubok Phone National Football Championship at the Shariatpur Stadium yesterday.

Lynchpin Dilip scored the all-important goal in the second-half to set up a last four clash against Shariatpur.

At the Magura Stadium, the hosts notched a 2-0 victory over Narail also to reach the semi-finals in their zone.

The match got off to a rollicking start as Saiful scored as early as in the second minute.

Things got worse for Narail after Kamal was sent off in the 27th minute.

Jilur then added one more for Magura in the second-half in front of a 15,000 strong crowd.

Vietnam down Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh went down 2-1 against Vietnam in the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Zone Group-3 in Manila on Saturday.

Shibu Lal led Quoc Khanh Le 6-0 but then the Vietnamese player was forced to retire handing a victory to Lal.

After that all went downhill for Bangladesh as Minh Quanh DO defeated Amol Roy 6-4, 6-2 and then trounced Shibu Lal 6-0, 6-1.

A total of the eight countries -- hosts Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Singapore, Iran and Vietnam -- are participating in the five-day meet being held on clay court.



PHOTO: STAR
BACK TO AFRICA: New face on the national team Sakib Al Hasan (R), an all-rounder, and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak come out of the BCB office after collecting their kits yesterday. The two recently returned from Zimbabwe after playing for the A team.

Tigers Africa-bound

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

A 16-member Bangladesh cricket team leave Dhaka this morning for Zimbabwe to play five one-day internationals against the southern African nation.

Habibul Bashar's men's African safari will also include a three-match one-day series against neighbouring ICC associate members Kenya in August.

This is the Tigers' third visit to Zimbabwe since they entered the elite Test club in 2000. But this one is going to be altogether a different assignment for the boys of Dav Whatmore because for the first time they go into the series as favourites after their previous visits in 2001 and 2004.

Zimbabwe enjoy a superior home record against Bangladesh after winning both Test and one-day series against Bangladesh's lone one-day victory in six matches and one draw in four Test encounters.

But the whole scenario has changed following the departure of frontline Zimbabwean cricketers from the national team and that's why Bangladesh are relishing the

prospect of recording their first-ever away series victory.

"There is no doubt that there were a number of world class cricketers in the Zimbabwean team when we first visited and then in 2004. Players like Heath Streak and Grant Flower were there. But you know everything has changed and we are going to face a very ordinary side which is the most significant difference between the previous and present trips," said captain Bashar, who started his career as captain in Zimbabwe in 2004, yesterday.

The visitors will also play under a different weather condition at this time of year. "You know our A team visited the country recently and we learnt from the players and officials that the weather is chilly. But that was not the case in the previous occasions," informed Bashar, who

was also on the team in their first visit in 2001.

A very encouraging fact for the 33-year-old Bangladesh captain is that all his colleagues but pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza have the experience of playing against the Africans either with national or A teams.

"We will get five days before the series and it would be good enough for us to adjust to the conditions. And interestingly all of us excepting Mashrafe have had an idea about the conditions there," he added.

Ace pacer Mashrafe is also excited about the fact that he is the only player on the team who is visiting the country for the first time.

"Yes, it is quite exciting for me. I am also looking forward to bowling out there as my colleagues have informed me that the Harare pitch offers a lot of assistance to the fast bowlers. My main concern is to finish the series without being hit by any injury. If it would be nice if I could play all the matches on the tour," hoped the Narail Express.

Bangladesh will launch their campaign with a limited-overs practice match against Zimbabwe A on July 26 and then play the one-day internationals on July 29, 30 and August 2, 4 and 6.

SQUAD

Habibul Bashar (captain), Mohammad Ashraf, Shahriar Nafees, Rajin Saleh, Javed Omar, Aftab Ahmed, Mushfiqur Rahim, Alok Kapali, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Syed Rassel, Shahadat Hossain, Forhad Reza and Sakib Al Hasan.

Sachin irked at Sanjay

INTERNET, undated

Discussion and speculation over Sachin Tendulkar's fitness seems never ending.

And joining the fray is the batting maestro himself who is reportedly offended by a statement made by former India player and commentator Sanjay Manjrekar.

From cancelling the fitness test to doubts over his actual fitness level, the rumour mill are working overtime and the little master has finally lost his patience.

Tendulkar lashed out at Manjrekar who wrote in a newspaper column that Tendulkar should make himself available for the Sri Lanka series even if he is not 100 per cent fit as he brings in a lot of experience with him.

Tendulkar's reply to this was, "I don't want to comment much, but I feel sorry that an ex-India player has made statements without checking and without talking to the people concerned. I also find it surprising that he has made these statements without being in the dressing room and knowing the true situation."

Manjrekar expressed surprise over Tendulkar's strong reaction to his column.

"All that I had to say I wrote in my article. It is out there and people are reading it. I have nothing more to say," Manjrekar commented.

But this is not the only instance when Tendulkar's injury has come under scrutiny.

On Thursday some newspapers had inaccurately reported that Sachin would now have to throw using his left hand and won't be able to field beyond the 30 yard circle a fact refuted both by the Board of Control for Cricket in India and Tendulkar's doctors.

Butt & Farhat fashion Pak victory

CRICINFO, undated

Salman Butt and Imran Farhat spent useful time in the middle, ahead of the second Test at Old Trafford, as the Pakistanis suffered few problems reaching their target against Northamptonshire.

The opening pair -- under pressure after a poor showing at Lord's -- added 118 to take their team most of the way.

Northants never threatened to take early wickets as Butt and Farhat were quickly into their stride. Farhat twice cleared the ropes during his 96-ball 64, an innings that will do his chances of retaining his place in the Test side no harm. With Younis Khan fit and set to return, at No. 3, one of Butt and Farhat will probably miss out at Old Trafford following Faisal Iqbal's promising second innings at Lord's.

However, Butt also laid down a marker for next week with an attractive 84 off 120 balls. He was far from his best at Lord's, with scores of 10 and 0, but England are well aware of his talents following impressive showings during the winter. He fell with just three runs required, one of two late wickets for Bilal Shafayat, and now Pakistan's attentions can switch to preparing for the second Test.

Their bowling attack is still being stretched through injury with Shoaib Akhtar, Navedul Hasan and Mohammad Asif absent.

Shahid Nazir's three second-innings wickets, yesterday, will have put pressure on Mohammad Sami and Umar Gul, while the uncapped Samiullah Khan showed potential.

BRIEF SCORES

PAKISTAN: 250 for nine declared and 160 for three (Butt 84, Farhat 64)

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: 269 for three and 140

Shoaib aims to speed up comeback

AFP, London

Fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar has promised to pose England's batsmen even more of a threat than he did last year when he returns to Pakistan's Test team.

"I still can't set a comeback time for Pakistan, though I know the third or fourth Tests have been mentioned," Akhtar told Bigstar-cricket.com on Friday as he contemplated a return to action next month at either Headingley or The Oval, where the series climax against England starts on August 17.

"I don't feel that it is up to me because if it was I would be playing

NATIONAL AGE-GROUP SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS END BKSP runaway winners

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP ruled supreme as the three-day 22nd Keya Cosmetics National Age-Group Swimming Championships concluded at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

The lone sports institute of the country not only finished on top with 44 gold, 34 silver and 22 bronze medals but also presented two best swimmers of the meet in Sonia Akhter and Nazmul Haque -- in the women and men's sections respectively.

Sonia, who hails from Jhenidha, hogged the spotlight with eleven

gold and two silver medals to be adjudged best woman swimmer in the competition while her Kishoreganj mate Nazmul bagged seven gold medals for the men's crown.

The last day saw four new national records being set with Sonia achieving two out of her day's three gold medals in the 100m butterfly and 800m freestyle.

The other records were set by Laboni Akhter Jui of Bangladesh Ansar in 200m individual medley and Nazma Khatun of Meherpur Swimming Club in 50m butterfly.

"I am really happy with my performance, but my dream is to become

the best swimmer in the regional competition. We need more facilities and financial support for better performance at the international stage," said an excited Sonia, who herself broke six national records in the meet.

"I am delighted but I want to continue my success at the senior level. My target is to bring international laurels for my country and I am confident that I can do that," said Nazmul Haque, who clinched seven gold medals, three of them coming with national records.

In the 30 events on the final day Bangladesh Krira Shikha

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PHOTO: STAR
Sonia Akhter (L) and Nazmul Haque, both from BKSP, pose with their trophies for the best swimmers of the National Age-Group Swimming Championships at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur on Saturday.

Sourav gets his own back

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Deposed Indian captain Sourav Ganguly has blamed mentor Jagmohan Dalmiya for forcing him out of the team, saying the former world cricket boss 'played' with his career, media reports said on Saturday.

In an extraordinary outburst, Ganguly accused Dalmiya of leaking the infamous e-mail from coach Greg Chappell last year that led to India's most successful Test captain losing his place in the team.

Chappell, in the e-mail meant for Indian cricket chiefs, had said Ganguly did not deserve to remain captain since he was "selfish" and undermined the morale of the rest of the team.

"People who leak e-mails and sacrifice players' careers should be heavily punished," Ganguly wrote in

an e-mail to his brother Snehashish from England where he is playing for Northamptonshire.

"There are people in the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) who are playing with players' careers to suit themselves. They should not be allowed to go scot-free as it takes years of hard work to reach a certain level in sports."

Ganguly's explosive e-mail was released to the media by his brother ahead of the CAB elections on July 30 where Dalmiya is being challenged on his home turf by Kolkata police commissioner Prasun Mukherjee.

The influential Ganguly family has openly campaigned against Dalmiya, the former International Cricket Council (ICC) president who lost control of the Indian cricket board last year.

A defeat in the CAB elections could end Dalmiya's 36-year career as a cricket administrator that saw him organise two World Cups in the

Indian subcontinent in 1987 and 1996 and made the region the financial hub of the sport.

Asked to comment on Ganguly's outburst, Dalmiya mocked: "What, another leaked e-mail? I'm no longer in power in the Indian board, since I have nothing to give, I no longer expect loyalty."

Dalmiya denied having leaked Chappell's e-mail to the media last September.

"Chappell has already said that he wanted to send me that mail, but it bounced back repeatedly," said Dalmiya. "So if I did not get it, how could I leak it?"

There is speculation that Ganguly chose to hit out at his mentor to please the current regime in Indian cricket led by political heavyweight Sharad Pawar and force his way back into the team.

Ganguly last played for India in the third and final Test against Pakistan in Karachi in February, but no many believe he can make a comeback.

"One argument is that pleasing Pawar may facilitate Sourav's comeback. However, that can only be on the strength of solid performances," said the Kolkata-based Telegraph newspaper on Saturday.

"Sourav is struggling even in England for Northamptonshire. So, it's debatable whether the e-mail helps. Yet, there's little doubt many will now see Sourav as being ungrateful."

It is widely known that Dalmiya influenced the selectors to pick Ganguly for his Test debut in 1996 and helped the former captain in his numerous run-ins with the ICC.

BBC adds: Ganguly has called for a probe into the leaked e-mail that ended his India career.

Ganguly told Dalmiya's election rival, Prasad Mukherjee, the person who leaked the e-mail should be punished.

The call was seen by many as a hint that Dalmiya was the man behind the leak.

Currently playing county cricket with Northamptonshire, Ganguly contacted Mukherjee via e-mail this week.

"Sourav's e-mail hints that he indirectly supports me. Also many people in the local association want change in the local association this year," Mukherjee told the BBC.

Dalmiya declined to comment on this issue when contacted.

However, he told the BBC he has decided to fight the election after being overwhelmed by the goodwill of members.

"Many members of the CAB have told me that they will not be part of the board if I do not contest the election," he said.



Did U Know?

Iran's Yahya Golohammadi became the fifth-oldest goalscorer (36 years, 84 days) in the history of the World Cup when he scored against Mexico in the 2006 World Cup on June 11.



Arjuna Ranatunga

(Sri Lanka's World Cup winning captain)

"I love cricket above everything else and I am what I am today because of the game."

Paul confident of Ashes win

AFP, London

Paul Collingwood said it would be great if Australia underestimated England on the run-up to this winter's Ashes series because they have not done well since their 2-1 series home victory over the Australians.

In 10 Tests since that series, England have only won twice and lost four times as they struggled with injuries to their star players.

Australia have won 11 of their dozen Test outings since but they will no doubt heed their misjudgement of the opposition last summer when the first-Test win at Lord's invited a false sense of security.

"We haven't played to the standards we want to play to, or the standards we set for ourselves last

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Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Andrew Flintoff has been ruled out of action for 12 weeks after being told on Saturday that he needs surgery on his injured left ankle.

The all-rounder will have the operation next week and will miss the three remaining Test matches against Pakistan and all of the five-match one-day series scheduled for this English summer.

He must also be a major doubt for the Champions Trophy in India, which starts on October 7, one week before the end of Flintoff's scheduled rehabilitation period.

The negative results of Flintoff's consultation with a specialist were made public 24 hours before England are due to announce their squad for the second Test. The match starts on Thursday at Old Trafford, Flintoff's home ground.

Freddie ankle gives away

The ankle problems had already forced Flintoff to sit out a five-match one-day series against Sri Lanka, which England lost 5-0, and the first Test against Pakistan, which ended in a draw.

But he had appeared on track for a comeback at Old Trafford after playing without pain for the first

three days of his county Lancashire's match at Kent.

On Friday however he began to feel discomfort in the ankle after bowling just two overs, prompting the ECB to send him back to the specialist.

The injury first became apparent when Flintoff was bowling during the final Test against Sri Lanka at Trent Bridge nearly two months ago.

A scan revealed floating bone fragments, left over from an operation on the same ankle at the beginning of last year.

Flintoff was badly missed during the embarrassing one-day white-wash by Sri Lanka and his absence meant they had just four frontline bowlers on show at Lord's, where they lacked the firepower to bowl Pakistan out twice on a good pitch.

The absence of Flintoff makes it likely Warwickshire batsman Ian Bell, who was set to be axed despite scoring an unbeaten hundred at Lord's, will retain his place in the second Test line-up and Andrew Strauss will continue as captain.



ANDREW FLINTOFF