

Mahela not happy

AFP, Mohali

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene is looking forward to a disciplined performance from his bowlers in the remaining qualifying matches of the Champions Trophy after making a winning start.

Sri Lanka beat Bangladesh by 37 runs in the opening qualifier under lights here on Saturday, but their bowling left a lot to be desired.

They conceded 36 extras, the second-highest contributor in Bangladesh's total of 265-9, after posting a challenging 302-8. Their bowlers sent down 21 wides and eight no-balls.

Sri Lanka's total owed much of its substance to young opener Upul Tharanga's brilliant 105 off 129 balls with the help of one six and 11 fours.

"We did not play our A class game and there are certain areas where we have to improve and we will do that in remaining games," said Jayawardene.

Sri Lanka play Zimbabwe at Ahmedabad on October 10 and defending champions West Indies on October 14 at Mumbai in their last two qualifying matches.

The top two sides will advance to the main draw that features world champions Australia, England, India, South Africa, New Zealand and Pakistan.

Jayawardene said his team did not perform up to the mark in the opening game because they had not played much international cricket in recent months.

They played their last full one-day international three months ago.

"We didn't play a smart game, especially in the second half of their innings but we have not played many one-dayers recently and that was one of the reasons why we were not able to perform to our potential," he said.

The Sri Lankan skipper didn't blame the dew for his bowlers' below-par performance when they fielded under lights at the Punjab Cricket Association stadium.

"The dew came on only around 8.30 pm and by that time the spinners had nearly bowled their overs," he said.

"We have to expect such things in day-night matches. I think it is good that we fielded in the evening. It will give us an idea what to expect in remaining matches."

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar defended his decision to field first after winning the toss, saying his bowlers failed to make the most of conditions in early stages.

"It was a good toss to win," he said.

"There was grass on the wicket, but we didn't put the ball in the right areas in the opening 10 overs."

Seamers Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Syed Rashed and Forhad Reza failed to get early wickets and went on to concede 188 runs in 28 overs.



PHOTO: STAR

Acme's lanky all-rounder Shabbir Khan (L) and wicketkeeper-batsman Dhiman Gosh steal a single during their match-winning 83-run stand for the seventh wicket against Saifang Fan in the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Acme, StarTel win

FROM PAGE 17 made 35 while Subrata Sarker highest 39 during a 49-run fourth wicket stand.

Left-arm spinner Ahsanullah picked 3-26 while new ball duo Debabrata Paul and Gazi Alamgir chipped in with a couple of wickets each.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Dhiman Ghosh salvaged Acme with a smashing 59 not out after their innings was halved with just 72 runs on board.

The wicketkeeper-batsman was the only local player to shine after their star-studded line-up featuring Nasiruddin Faruque (12), Hannan Sarkar (9), Ehsanul Haque (6), Manzarul Rana (2) and Marshall Ayub chipped in with a couple of wickets each.

Syfang: 167-7 in 50 overs (Imrul 64, Moshir 24, Ismail 13, Towhid 25, Sumon 11, Asadul 11, extras 14, Alamgir 3-39).

Acme: 168-7 in 45.2 overs (Nasiruddin 12, Zahoor 33, Dhiman 59 n.o., Sabbir 21, extras 13, Ariful 4-24).

valuable 83-run seventh wicket stand. Dhiman, adjudged man-of-the-match, cracked four fours and two sixes.

Earlier on the day, openers Imrul Kayes (64 off 127 balls) and Moshir Alam (24 off 42 balls) gave Syfang a decent but slow start, from which they never managed to push the run-rate.

Published by Mondadori later this month, it contains 249 possible phrases used to spark the head-butts. Selling at 10 Euros, the entire proceeds will go to Unicef.

"Dear reader, as you have no doubt understood, I've had fun in expanding on the absurd side of this whole affair," wrote Materazzi in the preface.

It's believed that the book will be translated and sold on the international market.

Materazzi writes

FROM PAGE 20 Now the Inter and Italy defender has decided to take advantage of the public interest in the event to release a joke-book called "What I really said to Zidane."

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Lucky Luca

FROM PAGE 20 running to reach Euro 2008, as they are in third place in Group B with four points, behind leaders Scotland on nine and France with six.

"It was great to play in the packed Stadio Olimpico with some wonderful choreography in the stands. Now we have to go to Georgia and bring back the three points."

Alonso tightens

FROM PAGE 20 mechanical problems, so that was a big surprise for me.

"It is so good for the team, to have our confidence back, and we have waited a long time for this. In Hungary, I thought we would win and in China, but we never finished the job. The taste of victory is even better because of this."

"But the races are long and you know you have to finish. These points are important, but as we all expected the championship will not be decided until the last race, in Brazil."

Alonso now leads Schumacher by 10 points in the drivers' standings and they are level on seven wins apiece this season.

Schumacher can only claim an unprecedented eighth crown if he wins and Alonso fails to score a point in Sao Paulo.

Massa said he had suffered a puncture in the early part of the race and that this caused him to stop earlier than expected, an incident that also wrecked Ferrari's strategy of using Massa to run ahead of Alonso and slow him down. "I think I might have won the race otherwise after what happened to Michael," said Massa. "Now we have to go to Brazil and we must do our best."

Fisichella praised the Renault team and said he had wept and felt very emotional because of the death of his best friend who he did not name, on Thursday.

"He was my very best friend so this was not an easy race for me at all, mentally or psychologically," he said.

The result lifted Renault back on top of the constructors' championship.

Briton Jenson Button in a Honda finished fourth ahead of Finn Kimi Raikkonen in a McLaren, Italian Jarno Trulli in a Toyota and his teammate German Ralf Schumacher, who was seventh.

German Nick Heidfeld, in a BMW Sauber, finished eighth.

Visiting the Rock Garden

SPORTS REPORTER from Chandigarh

"No visit to Chandigarh City can be completed without the trip of celebrated Rock Garden" is the slogan of the city's tourism department.

And that's why Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar didn't want to miss the opportunity to visit the place along with former skipper Khaled Mashud, Aftab Ahmed and assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin yesterday.

And the journey to the Rock Garden from Taj Garden Hotel is not a difficult one as it takes only 20 minutes by rickshaw.

Despite the 37-run defeat against Sri Lanka at Mohali on Saturday, the Tigers were in a cheerful mood after putting on an "impressive" performance.

After a video session in the morning where coach Dav Whatmore analysed the individual slip-ups the players had a free time to enjoy and when most of the players decided to pass the time in their rooms, the three took time off for sightseeing.

The Bangladesh team will practice today morning at the Chandigarh Stadium before flying to Jaipur in the afternoon.

Japan fifth

AFP, Madrid

Japan clinched fifth place at the women's field hockey World Cup on Saturday with a 1-0 win over the United States which guaranteed them a spot in January's Champions Trophy in Argentina.

Korea secured ninth place with a surprise 2-1 defeat of China and India avoided the wooden spoon by beating South Africa 1-0 in the 11-12 play-off.

After a bright start by the Americans, Japan gradually took control of midfield and just after the break grabbed the only goal of the game when Kaori Chiba chipped the ball over Amy Tran to score.

"It was a dream for us to play in the World Cup," said Japan coach Yoo Seung Jin.

"To take fifth position and qualify for Argentina is a dream come true. This is a great result for Japanese hockey."

Question mark

FROM PAGE 17 "It's too early to say about the second match team, but surly Mehrab is in our consideration. It is not unlikely to see him against Windies," said Faruque, who was excited with the team performance.

"Our main target is to win the remaining matches, so we will definitely try to select the right combination to fulfil our dream," said the former Bangladesh skipper.

He however echoed the coach and captain's sentiment that the Tigers showed impressive performance against Sri Lanka.

"I am really satisfied because Sri Lanka is one of the top teams now," he added.

Asif's family

FROM PAGE 17 Charge of Gulshan police station Mahub Alam Khan, Sub-Inspectors Jasim Uddin and Faisal Zaman and driver of DIG (SB) Havildar Abdul Khaleq and 35 other unidentified persons.

Meanwhile, the National Kriya Federation Forum has decided to bring out a silent procession in the city tomorrow in protest of the barbaric police attack on the shooters and the federation employees. All the sport federation officials, sports organisers and players of all disciplines will take part in the procession, which will start at the Bangladesh Football Federation Bhawan at 11am and end at the Jatiya Press Club.

MSC ride

FROM PAGE 17 with another field goal.

Playmaker Maksud Alam Habul, Mohammedan's hero of the Club Cup final with the golden goal against archrivals Abahani, sealed the victory two minutes from time to run more sally on the Sadharan Bima grounds.

In the day's first match, Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club rode on first half strikes by Chandan and Shishu to down Azad Sporting Club 2-0.

Penalty corner specialist Chandan hit the mark from the side's first penalty corner after eight minutes while Shishu secured three points for Mariners from a field goal in the 24th minute.

Defending champions Usha Kriya Chakra will take on Sonali Bank in today's lone match at 3pm.

Usha are expected to field three foreign stick wielders, who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday night, in their second match including Pakistani captain and World Cupper Mohammed Saqlain. The other two recruits are Pakistan junior captain and forward Shaqat Rasool and midfielder Mohammed Delwar.

Former Pakistan national coach Rana Mujahid is due to join the old-Dhaka outfit within a couple of days.

Abahani, meanwhile, will bring their second player from India, forward Prakash Chalke who also played for the sky-blues in the last season.

Pigeon predicts 5-0 again



AFP, London

Australian seamer Glenn McGrath has once again predicted that England will suffer a 5-0 whitewash in the Ashes that starts in November.

The outspoken McGrath was left eating humble pie last year after making the same prediction last year -- England won 2-1 to reclaim the Ashes for the first time in 18 years.

But McGrath, affectionately called "Pigeon", insists he has even more reason to make such a controversial declaration this time around and has criticised England for failing to progress from their incredible triumph.

"I reckon it will be 5-0 this time, as well," he said in the Mail on Sunday newspaper. "To say anything else would be negative. If we're going to win 2-1, or 3-2, which games are we going to lose?"

McGrath believes Duncan Fletcher's side are there for the taking this winter after suffering injuries to key players, including captain Michael Vaughan and reverse-swing specialist Simon Jones, which has forced them to bring a number of Ashes rookies Down Under.

The veteran fast bowler also reckons his absence during the two Tests England won to clinch last year's series was one of the main reasons Australia were beaten.

"England are not as strong as they were last year," he added. "But Australia are a lot stronger. And I'm fit, unlike last time."

"Put it this way, in the three Tests I played in last time, we drew two and won one."

"England are not the same team as they were. I'm disappointed in them. I expected them to kick on after beating us and conquer the world but it just goes to show how losing players through injury can unsettle the side."

McGrath then proceeded to expose what he sees as England's weaknesses, both collectively and individually.

"Michael Vaughan and Simon Jones are huge losses for them," he said. "There are doubts over the fitness of Freddie Flintoff, Steve Harmison and Ashley Giles, while things are not too good for Marcus Trescothick."

"They have new guys who have done well but have never played in the Ashes series, let alone one in Australia."

"We'll see how the likes of Alastair Cook get on down here and we'll try and open up old wounds with Ian Bell."

"Kevin Pietersen will find a second season in international cricket is always harder than the first and I'm sure our batsmen will plan to get after Monty Panesar."

"As for me, I'll be paying attention to their openers, and to their new boys."

Former captains Imran Khan and Javed Miandad despaired Sunday at the state of Pakistani cricket after a recent string of fiascos and said the way the game was run in Pakistan had to change.

"The country is run on ad hoc basis and so is cricket, and I think ad hocism has to finish," Imran told AFP.

Pakistan cricket, run by ad hoc bodies since 1999, has been in the spotlight since August's Oval Test against England when captain Inzamam-ul-Haq refused to take his team back on the field after it was accused of ball-tampering.

Inzamam was acquitted of tampering but was handed a four-match ban for brining the game into disrepute. His replacement Younis Khan last week refused to lead the side, saying he did not want to be a "dummy" captain.

The refusal prompted Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan to resign. His successor Nasim Ashraf reinstated Younis on Saturday, hours before the team's departure for India and the Champions Trophy.

Imran said recent events showed that Pakistan had to change the way cricket is run in the country, in particular its policy of allowing the president to pick who will lead the cricket board.

"It's a tried and failed system because the cricket chief is not accountable to anyone no matter how many blunders he makes," he said.

The 53-year-old Imran, who is now a member of national parliament after switching from cricket to politics in 1995, is a vociferous critic of the military-led government.

"Elected associations should elect the chief which happens everywhere in the world."

Imran's former teammate and legendary batsman Miandad said recent incidents showed the relationship between the board and the players was breaking down.

"I can't understand what has been happening. It's the lack of fear of the board and selectors. Board had encouraged indiscipline and players have little respects for their superiors," said 49-year-old Miandad.

Miandad urged the new cricket chief to take drastic action to repair the situation.

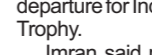
"For posterity we will have to purge the dirt and make the base and the Board strong."

"Why did the Board tolerate indiscipline. Australians did not tolerate Shane Warne's indiscipline even though he is so important to them," said Miandad, also a former coach.

He also questioned the reaction of Bob Woolmer, Pakistan's English coach, to the highly charged atmosphere at the time of the Oval standoff.

"Woolmer's character was questionable in the Oval fiasco. Team was under pressure because of the events and he talked about resigning," said Miandad.

Imran, Javed for revamp



AFP, Karachi

Former captains Imran Khan and Javed Miandad despaired Sunday at the state of Pakistani cricket after a recent string of fiascos and said the way the game was run in Pakistan had to change.

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PHOTO: AFP

England hard-hitting batsman Kevin Pietersen talks to the press during an open media session in New Delhi yesterday.

Federer takes Tokyo title



AFP, Tokyo

Reigning world number one Roger Federer showed Tim Henman no mercy on Sunday, taking apart the Briton's serve-and-volley game to win the men's singles title at the Japan Open in straight sets.

The 25-year-old Swiss top seed, playing his 13th final in 14 events this season, notched up an easy 6-3, 6-3 victory over Henman, a surprise finalist making his first appearance in Tokyo in eight years.

"It was excellent, of course, I'm really happy with this tournament. It's been a great season so far," Federer said.

"I've had a great experience visiting Japan and the fans are really friendly to me, so this has been a great week for me."

Henman was on the defensive from the start, saving two break points in the fourth game of the first set. But his serve let him down when he hit three double faults to lose the crucial sixth game, and eventually the set.

The British veteran also had no luck converting break opportunities on Federer's serve.

Federer, who set an Open era record with a 56-match hard court winning streak earlier this year, forced Henman to send a forehead sailing long to finish off the 67-minute match.

"I definitely got lucky against (Takao) Suzuki (in the quarter-finals). It was a very close match and I could have lost it easily, but I came through and gained the opportunity to win the title," said Federer.

"I'm a bit surprised, because I had a lot of jet lag, and to always keep winning, it's a very hard thing to do. I'm very tired now mentally and physically. I really hope to come back next year and defend the title."

Henman, whose serve-and-volley game proved ineffective on the windy centre court, was nonetheless satisfied with his performance this week.

"I still tried to play the way I wanted to do, getting forward, but he has the ability to hit passing shots so well and consistently. It makes it so difficult to play against," said Henman.

"At times I felt like I was playing some great tennis and he still ended up winning the point. That's when you have to say 'he is just too good.'"

The scoreline was a deja vu for Henman, who lost to Federer 6-3, 6-3 in his last appearance in an ATP final at Indian Wells in March 2004.

The women's title in Tokyo went to top seed Marion Barloti of France, who came from behind to beat local favourite Aiko Nakamura, 2-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Macedonia hold

FROM PAGE 20

Gerrard lost the ball 40 yards from his own goal and it was picked up by striker Goran Pandev. The Lazio player then burst into the England penalty area before firing a left-foot strike into the side-netting from ten yards.

Having been written off as no-hopers before the game, the near miss was a warning of Macedonia's threat, but England laboured as they attempted to respond.

Wayne Rooney and Crouch struggled to carve out chances and Frank Lampard and Gerrard were frustrated by resolute Macedonian defending.

Macedonia continued to carry the most threat and full-back Robert Petrov aimed a left-foot volley wide from 12 yards on 37 minutes. Considering that he was unmarked, it was a wasted chance by the CSKA Sofia defender.

England could only improve in the second-half and when Lampard forced keeper Jane Nikolovski into a crucial save on 48 minutes, it seemed McClaren had injected purpose and direction into his team during the half-time break.

But Macedonia fought fire with fire and they had two great chances in the space of a minute when Goce Sedloski headed over from six yards before substitute Aco Stojkov brought a fine save from Paul Robinson after out-pacing King in the penalty area. Winger Stewart Downing was one of England's few successes and his curling cross from the left teed up Crouch for a diving header, brilliantly saved by Nikolovski on 58 minutes.

Despite the importance of Nikolovski, Macedonia were by no means forced to withstand heavy England pressure.

The home side did increase the pressure in the closing stages, but they never really threatened denying Macedonia the point their performance deserved.

And when McClaren substituted the ineffective Rooney with 16 minutes still to play, it summed up England's lack of ideas and over-reliance on a young player who is struggling to emerge from the first real form slump of his career.

Aussie focus on Trophy

FROM PAGE 17

"We have as good a team as in the last World Cup. In fact, the balance between bat and ball as well as experience and youth is better in this present lot," said Ponting, who has scored 9293 runs in 256 one-dayers.

Ponting, who had hammered a match-winning 140 not out against India in the final of the last World Cup, felt the home side would be a formidable team in the Champions Trophy.

"India are always hard to beat at home, especially with the crowd support, but then we have a good record against them," said Ponting.

Australian coach John Buchanan too said his team was concentrating on the tournament in India rather than any other series.

"The Champions Trophy is a one-day tournament which I feel any team can win. It is a build-up towards the World Cup, so we are not bothered about the Ashes or any other event for the time being."

"This is a tournament in which you have to be at your best, whatever your ranking. Looking too far ahead will make one vulnerable because losing one game can get a team in big trouble," said Buchanan.

The coach said his focus with the all-conquering Aussie sides of recent years had been to try and enhance individual abilities.

"It is up to the players to keep improving themselves and a coach can only create an environment for them to improve and grow as individuals," he said.

Australia, who have never won the Champions Trophy, play their opening match against a qualifier in Mumbai on October 18.

The ongoing qualifying league features the holders the West Indies, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, with the top two teams making it to the main tournament starting on October 15.

Kamungozi not out 0 Extras: (lb-1, w-3, nb-3) 7 Total: (All out in 30.1 overs) 85 Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-10, 3-31, 4-31, 5-39, 6-46, 7-58, 8-82, 9-84.

Bowler O M R W Taylor 6 0 19 2 Bradshaw 8 1 20 1 Smith 6 2 14 2 Bravo 7 0 28 0 Gayle 3.1 1 3 3

WEST INDIES Gayle c Kamungozi b Chigumbura 41 Chanderpaul not out 14 Lara not out 24 Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-1, nb-4) 11 Total: (For one wkt in 14.2 overs) 90 Fall of wicket: 1-66.

Bowler O M R W Rainsford 5 1 21 0 Ireland 4 1 27 0 Chigumbura 3 1 17 1 Utseya 2.2 0 19 0

Result: West Indies won by nine wickets. Man-of-the-match: Chris Gayle. Toss: Zimbabwe

Easy win pleases Lara

FROM PAGE 17 played too many shots early on. It was a better