

PRO LEAGUE TRANSFER

Much ado about nothing

SPORTS REPORTER

The opening day of the inaugural Professional Football League fired blank as not a single team joined the transfer scene yesterday.

The Pro League officials and the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) high-ups eagerly waited to see the response of the first day's transfer at the BFF Bhaban but as expected, no one turned out.

Not only the officials, the media also had to return frustrated, especially the TV cameras that did not get the required footage.

The 12 participating teams, who have two months to complete the procedures, are expected to confirm services of all the desired players before submitting their list.

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Did U Know?

The record for the most Olympic medals ever won is held by Soviet gymnast Larissa Latynina. Competing in three Olympics, between 1956 and 1964, she won 18 medals -- 9 gold, 5 silver and 4 bronze medals.



Andrew Flintoff
(England cricket captain)
"Get me out of here as soon as you can."
He was caught on tape talking to the ECB Media officer Andrew Walpole ahead of the captain's pre-match press conference at the WACA.



PHOTO: AFP

MONTY AIRLINER TAKES OFF: England spinner Monty Panesar spreads his arms after taking yet another Australian wicket on the first day of the third Ashes Test in Perth yesterday. Panesar took five wickets on his Ashes debut.

Monty puts Eng on frontfoot

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Ashes debutant Monty Panesar spun England back into the series on the opening day of the third Test against Australia at the WACA Ground here Thursday, claiming five wickets as the home side were dismissed for 244.

Needing at least a draw to keep their Ashes defence alive, the tourists were energised by the finger spin of Panesar and produced some of their best bowling of the series to dismiss the Australians cheaply after the hosts won the toss and chose to bat.

The home side struck back late in the day to have England 51 for two at stumps, with Andrew Strauss on 24 and Paul Collingwood on 10.

The Australians removed opener Alastair Cook and No. 3 Ian Bell cheaply. Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee picking up a wicket apiece, while Shane Warne

dropped Collingwood at first slip off Stuart Clark late in the day.

Although local Mike Hussey held the Australian innings together with an unbeaten 74, Panesar grabbed 5-92 from 24 overs and a rejuvenated Steve Harmison took 4-48 to rock the home side's hopes of wrapping up the Ashes here.

Panesar, controversially overlooked for the first two Tests, claimed his third five-wicket haul in his short Test career and became just the fourth left-arm spinner to claim five wickets in a Test at the WACA.

With all the speculation about his recall, the spinner admitted he was nervous when called into the attack.

"I was probably a little nervous in the first few overs," he said. "I took my time, I didn't want to rush into anything. I was pretty pleased with how the ball came out."

Panesar was introduced into the attack just minutes before lunch, Panesar had an immediate impact and celebrated accordingly when

he claimed opener Justin Langer's wicket with his seventh ball and the last delivery before the break.

Langer was clean bowled when he pushed forward defensively and played down the wrong line.

It was the start of an extraordinary day for Panesar.

Panesar took some damage from the recalled Andrew Symonds, who hit two sixes in three balls and took 17 runs off Panesar's 13th over.

However, the spinner had his revenge in the following over when Symonds cut at a shortish delivery and got a thin edge to wicketkeeper Geraint Jones, who snared the catch at the second attempt.

Panesar's next over saw him claim the prized wicket of Adam Gilchrist, who walked when he was caught without scoring by a diving Ian Bell at short-leg after the ball came off the pad and just brushed his gloves.

Australia then slumped to 214 for seven when Panesar struck again to remove an aggressive

Shane Warne, who attempted to cut Panesar and got a fine edge into the gloves of Jones.

Panesar grabbed his fifth wicket when Brett Lee stretched forward and was adjudged lbw by umpire Aleem Dar.

While Panesar was the hero, the embattled Harmison bounced back strongly to pick up four wickets, including a sharp catch off his own bowling to remove the dangerous Michael Clarke for 37.

Harmison was under pressure after claiming just one wicket in the first two Tests, but claimed the crucial wicket of Australian captain Ricky Ponting and his second wicket was memorable -- the big pace bowler somehow hauling in a Michael Clarke pull shot on his follow through.

Despite their batting woes, Hussey said the Australians had been lifted by the two late wickets.

He applauded the English for disciplined bowling and said the

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BANGLADESH-SCOTLAND 1ST ODI TODAY

Hosts eye 7 in a row

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

Bangladesh will look forward to stretch their winning run to seven matches when they take on ICC associate members Scotland in the first one-day international of a two-match series at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium here today.

Habibul Bashar who led the Tigers to six consecutive wins against Zimbabwe, thinks that they will have to earn the victory against the visitors.

There would, however, be disappointment for the cricket fans of the country because no live television coverage of the match. Nimbus, who holds the marketing rights of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, had earlier announced that they would not show the match from the port city as it would be costly to move the equipment from Dhaka. The series was outside its contract and the coverage of the December 17 match in Dhaka is also uncertain.

"We have seen them play today and although they lost the match to the Academy side, we have hard work tomorrow," Bangladesh

skipper Bashar told yesterday.

"May be they struggled because of their first match on the tour under totally unfamiliar conditions," he remarked about the Scots, who are playing their first overseas series after winning the one-day status.

"They are a strong batting side and also a good attack. We cannot take victory for granted because they have a lot of experienced guys who have been playing first-class cricket for long. I believe they are quality players and would give away nothing."

When asked about Bangladesh's recent winning streak, the captain said that he would be relishing extending the run as far as possible ahead of the World Cup.

"It would be nice to win seven matches in a row but we have to fight for it, I feel."

"The recent series win against Zimbabwe in front of the home crowd would encourage our players to win against the Scottish too and hopefully, we would be able to exploit the home advantage," Habibul observed.

Bangladesh, who had to struggle in their only previous clash against the Scots -- in the 1999 World Cup match in Edinburgh -- but eventually won, have made one change to the side that played the fifth match

against Zimbabwe last Saturday.

Shahadat Hossain returns to replace left-arm seamer Syed Rasel and Farhad Reza retains his place as veteran left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique has yet to recover from injury.

Scotland suffered a 33-run loss to a young Academy side yesterday at the match venue but captain Craig Wright termed Nafees, Mohammad Ashraf, Mashrafe Bin Mortuza and Mohammad Rafiq as key players of the hosts.

"We are here on a mission to establish ourselves as the 12th best cricket team in the world."

"Though this tour has been a debut for us in Bangladesh we would play to win the match," Wright said.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH: Habibul Bashar (captain), Shahriar Nafees, Mehrab Hossain, Aftab Ahmed, Sakib Al Hasan, Mohammed Ashraf, Mashrafe Bin Mortuza, Forhad Reza, Mushfiqur Rahim, Abdur Razzak and Shahadat Hossain.

SCOTLAND (from): Craig Wright (captain), Rana Hussain, Hajid Haq, Dougie Brown, Johan Nel, David Watts, Ross Lyons, Navdeep Singh Poonia, Ian McCallum, Colin Smith, Gavin Hamilton, Douglas Lockhart, Paul Hoffmann, Ryan Watson, John Blain.

Tamim greets the Scots

Cricket

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR from Chittagong

Local hero Tamim Iqbal struck a superb hundred to send visiting Scotland crashing by 33 runs against Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Academy in a warm-up match at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Winning the toss, BCB Academy skipper Nadif Chowdhury elected to bat first and his side scored 252 for six in 50 overs. Scotland failed to chase down the stiff target and were bowled out for 219 in 47.2 overs.

The young opener started off in uncharacteristic fashion as his opening partner Nazmus Sadat dominated their opening stand, adding 60 for the first wicket. But Sadat's loss and the quick dismissal of Jahurul Islam -- both to Scotland skipper Craig Wright -- did not deter the young side.

Number four Nadif joined Tamim

in the 16th over and both batsmen flourished on a batsman's paradise. Tamim cut loose after reaching his half-century, hitting sixes and fours at will.

The left-handed Tamim scored his hundred in 133 balls, hitting nine boundaries and four sixes while Nadif smashed a couple of sixes and five fours in his 76-ball 68.

The local boy could not hide his delight while saying, "I am particularly happy to score a century that proved instrumental for my team's win."

"I am looking forward to scoring more hundreds this season," said Tamim.

After both batsmen fell to Majid Haq, Marshall Ayub and Sohrwardi Shuvo added some important runs to the total. Haq took three wickets while the two early wickets from skipper Wright was the other notable bowling contribution.

The visitors, who take on Bangladesh in the first one-day international today, fell into early

trouble as seamer Ishraq Sonnet picked up opener Fraser Watts and one-drop Ryan Watson with the score on 14. But Navdeep Poonia batted well in a quickfire 63 off 73 balls, with the help of nine fours and a six.

Experienced campaigner Dougie Brown who failed to take a wicket, scored 47 runs but it was Neil McCullum who gave his side some hope as he also hit a fifty off 57 balls. But his dismissal ended their battle as the last wickets fell quite cheaply with left-arm Mosharraf Hossain adding two wickets to his earlier scalps of Tamim Hamilton (11) and Brown.

Sonnet, Sirajullah Khadem and Dollar Mahmud all took two wickets each for the young Academy side, whose skipper was content with his boys' effort.

"This is something great for me as my team won the match under my captaincy here," he said.

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PHOTO: ZOAHER HOSSAIN SIKDER

TAKE THAT: BCB Academy opener Tamim Iqbal hoists one over long-on for one of his four sixes in the warmup match against Scotland at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Hockey team finish 7th

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh finished seventh in 15th Asian Games men's hockey competition when they handed Taipei a 5-1 defeat in the play-off match at the Al Rayyan Hockey Stadium in Doha yesterday.

Russel Mahmud Jimmy and Mamunur Rahman Chayan each scored a brace as Bangladesh ended their campaign with two wins, the other being a 5-3 victory against Oman in the group stage.

Striker Jimmy opened the account just after three minutes but Bangladesh had to wait long for their second goal which gave them a 2-0 first half lead.

Defender Chayan, who missed

the last game against Malaysia due to injury following a brutal attack by Oman player Hossam Hassan, celebrated his return as the penalty corner specialist converted two chances either side of the break, in the 31 and 38 minutes.

Taipei pulled a goal back through Ming Heng Tsai's 43rd-minute penalty corner but failed to survive heavy pressure in the fag end with Zahidul Islam Rajan and Jimmy finding the mark inside one minute in the 66 and 67 minutes respectively.

Bangladesh lost 6-0 to India, 9-1 to South Korea and 4-1 to China in the group and 6-1 to Malaysia in the first of their two classification matches.

India clinched fifth place when they blanked Malaysia 4-0 later on the day.

Pakistan settled for bronze with a 4-2 victory against Japan.

On Wednesday, the chess team outplayed Syria 3-0 with Enamul International Master Hossain Rajib winning over IM Imad Hakk, Grandmaster Reefat Bin Sattar defeating Jwan Bakr and Shamima Akhter Liza securing full point against Afamya Mir Mahmud.

Bangladesh shared the fifth place with Indonesia, Uzbekistan and Iran -- all level on 13 points after eight rounds.

India confirmed gold with a round left as they took an unassailable lead with 21 points, followed by China (15.5 points), Qatar (15) and Kazakhstan (14.5).

Bangladesh were facing China in the ninth and final round match last night.

BD A v ZIM A Four-dayer from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The four-day match between Bangladesh A and Zimbabwe A will begin today at the Fatullah Stadium in Narayanganj.

The local side snuck past the visitors by one wicket in a low-scoring three-day game that ended Wednesday at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Both sides will look forward to a better wicket for batsmen at the Narayanganj ground after facing tough time at the Mirpur venue where the ball bounced and moved in an exaggerated manner. The bowlers, however, had fun as

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