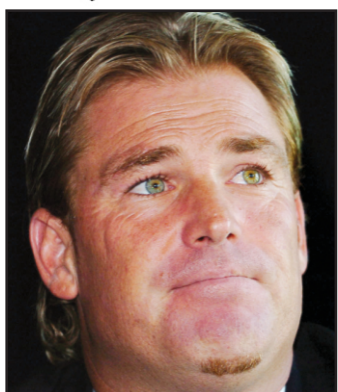




Did U Know?

On February 6, 1971 the first golf ball was hit on the moon by Alan Shepard.



Shane Warne

(Australian legendary leg-spinner) "I am starting to breathe again after the swell of the last two hours. I'll have a few drinks and a few smokes afterwards, and take it from there." During his announcement to retire.

NZ go for rotation

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand cricket has adopted the All Blacks' rotation policy for their World Cup build up, with Daniel Vettori named Saturday as captain for the early stages of the Sri Lanka one-day series.

Vettori takes over the reins from Stephen Fleming for the first two games in the five-match series.

Express bowler Shane Bond will also sit out the first two matches as New Zealand cricket follows the highly successful All Blacks' rugby policy of giving frontline players plenty of rest to keep them fresh for key matches.

Cricketer coach John Bracewell wants to ensure he has depth of experience for the World Cup in the West Indies in March and April, just as All Blacks' coach Graham Henry is eyeing the rugby World Cup in France later in the year.

Vettori was the first key cricketer subjected to the policy -- sitting out the two-match Twenty20 series, which ends in Auckland on Tuesday.

Fleming has captained New Zealand in 195 matches of his 257 one-day game career, though vice-captain Vettori has led the side in eight one-day matches over the past two seasons.

The injury-prone Bond, who played in Friday night's 18-run Twenty20 loss to Sri Lanka in Wellington, has been diverted to a reconditioning programme.

However, he is likely to figure when the squad is reselected for the final three one-day games

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Warne facing legal action?

PTI, Melbourne

Spin-wizard Shane Warne could be sued by Sri Lanka's Galle International Cricket Club for not honouring a pledge of 50,000 dollars for the reconstruction of a tsunami-hit ground where he took his 500th Test wicket.

"We have not even seen a penny. I will give them three months to deliver. Otherwise I will sue," Club director Jayananda Warnaweera said.

But the former Sri Lankan Test cricketer said he would wait to see if Warne made any announcement at the fourth Ashes cricket Test against England.

"That may not be necessary (to sue Warne). It is believed Warne will announce on Boxing Day -- the second anniversary of the tsunami -- five recipients of money from his dollar 2 million foundation. One is expected to be the Sri Lankan cricket club," he was quoted as saying by The Age.

Warnaweera said Shane Warne Foundation -- a charitable trust -- told the Club in June that the cost of fund raising items like wristbands at last year's Boxing Day Test was greater than the amount collected and no money would be sent to the club.

Foundation's then Chief

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McGrath after Warne

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Veteran Australian paceman Glenn McGrath, history's most successful fast bowler, announced his retirement Saturday, in a fresh blow to his team two days after Shane Warne revealed he was bowing out.

After a training session in Melbourne ahead of the fourth Ashes Test starting on Boxing Day, McGrath, 36, announced that the Sydney Test match next month, on his home cricket ground, would be his last five-day game.

"It's probably a perfect or fitting ending," McGrath said. "It is only been the last few games that I've really thought about it."

McGrath's announcement comes just two days after spin king Warne revealed he would give up international competition after the Sydney Test.

"To me it feels like the right time to go and I've trusted my instinct in the past and I feel it's time to trust it again," McGrath said.

However, he said he would continue playing one-day internationals for another four months, playing his last limited-overs games at the World Cup in the Caribbean, which runs from March 11 to April 28, before quitting all forms of cricket.

Having taken 555 wickets in 122 Tests since debuting against New Zealand in 1993, McGrath is third on the list of all-time wicket-takers

behind only Warne (699) and Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran (674).

McGrath's decision to up stumps on the game clears up recent frenzied speculation that he would leave the sport after the Ashes series to spend more time with his family.

He spent most of 2006 out of international cricket to be with wife Jane in her battle against cancer.

However, McGrath said his wife's illness had played no part in his decision, which, along with Warne's announcement, comes less than a fortnight after batsman Damien Martyn, 35, called time on his cricket career.

"In respect to Jane, her health has nothing to do with the decision I've made here today or over the last few weeks."

He also said that the nagging injuries that had dogged his career for the past three years were not a factor in his retirement.

"I have no doubts that I could have continued on probably for another couple of years."

"The body's feeling as good as it ever has, recovering well. I've sort of surprised myself (by) how well I'm pulling up."

Although McGrath was coy Friday on reports of his imminent revelation, he said Saturday that the past days' rumours had forced him to make an announcement earlier than he had expected.

He said: "The plan we came up with was for Shane to announce it before the Melbourne game and I was going to announce it before

Sydney.

"(But) with the scrutiny and the hearsay and what's happened mainly in the last few days, I wanted to get it out in the open, get it over and done with, basically, so we could get back and concentrate on the last two Tests."

He added: "With all good plans, they're good in theory but they don't seem to work."

McGrath said he and Warne had considered delaying their announcements in the event of Australia drawing or losing the most recent Test, in Perth, where their success clinched the return of the Ashes.

"Hopefully Shane and I coming out now, it's not a distraction for the last two Tests," he said.

"I think the timing of it couldn't be more perfect for both Shane and I."

McGrath said he looked forward to playing the remainder of the Ashes now that his announcement was off his chest.

"Hopefully we can get out there and play as well as we have for the whole summer and really nail these last two Tests."

While the rash of departures leaves a gaping hole in the Australian cricket side, McGrath said there was plenty of talent waiting in the wings to take his place.

He said the hard gap to fill would be that left by Warne, whom he described as the best cricketer he had played with.

"To me he's one of the best cricketers there's been."

Mates have 'heartbreak'

Cricket

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia cricket boss James Sutherland led the tributes to fast bowler Glenn McGrath, who announced on Saturday he would retire after next year's World Cup.

Sutherland said McGrath, whose last Test will be next month's final Ashes match with England, was a true professional who had performed with distinction in both Tests and one-day internationals for 13 years.

"They say bowlers win matches - they must have been thinking of players like Glenn McGrath when they said that," Sutherland said in a statement.

"His remorseless accuracy and forensic probing of the slightest

weakness in a batsman's technique is legendary."

Australian captain Ricky Ponting said McGrath's retirement marked the end of an era in Australian cricket following Shane Warne's announcement he was quitting as well.

"We're going to be losing two of the all-time greats in a pretty short period of time," Ponting told reporters in Melbourne.

"It's sad, but we've now got to push on in the next few weeks."

"We've known for a long time that these two weren't going to go on forever ... so as much as it's a sad time, it's an exciting time too because a lot of younger players will get their opportunities."

Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds said he was devastated by the news McGrath and Warne were quitting. The pair will play their

last match together in the last Ashes Test in Sydney starting on Jan 2.

"I'm heartbroken, to be perfectly honest, I don't want either of them to retire," Symonds said.

"But it's going to be a spectacle seeing how people respond to two of our best-ever players leave the game."

With the Ashes already back in Australian hands, the hype surrounding the final two Tests is all about the farewell of Australia's two most successful bowlers.

Opening batsmen Matthew Hayden said they deserved every accolade that came their way.

"It's a celebration of two wonderful careers," Hayden said.

"Each has displayed exactly what Australian cricket expects of its athletes. Both have had an amazing tenacity and longevity in the game."



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani's middle-order batsman Tushar Imran follows through after working the ball on the on-side during his match-winning 61 against Sonargaon in the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League at the BKSP cricket ground yesterday.

Kalabagan 'bowl-out' Biman

SPORTS REPORTER

Kalabagan found an unusual way to win their first match of this year's Twenty20 tournament: a bowl-out!

The struggling side triumphed over Bangladesh Biman 3-2 after both sides were tied at 115 runs each in the morning game of the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

Quirky and ridiculous as it sounds, the rules are quite simple: just hit three unguarded stumps.

Easy as it may sound, only Arafat Salahuddin, Rashedul Islam and Mahbubul Karim struck the stumps for winners Kalabagan while Mushfiqur Rahman and Mosharraf Rubel hit the target for Biman as Kalabagan won 3-2.

The misses on both sides looked quite absurd, as unlike football, there's no one to save the

ball from hitting the stumps!

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, young batsman Nadif Chowdhury made sure defending champions Old DOHS won with an over in hand, scoring an unbeaten 63 as they chased 135 runs set by City Club. He played a knock that suited the situation, hitting four boundaries and couple of sixes in his 43-ball knock as wickets fell around him.

He was well-supported by Abdur Razzaq who eased the pressure during the chase hitting a four and a six off spinner Fariduddin Masud at a vital juncture, giving Old DOHS a five-wicket win.

Away at BKSP, Abahani's big buy Tushar Imran did justice to his price tag as he also walked into a similar situation but had a smaller chase of 113 runs. He struck 61 off 53 balls that included five fours and a six.

He didn't find much support when he batted as only Nazmus Sadat reached double figures with 14 as Abahani won by three wickets

off the last ball of the match.

Earlier Sonargaon Cricketers opted to bat first, only to be bowled out for 112 runs. Left-arm spinner Suhawardi Shuvo took five for 16 runs and was adjudged man-of-the-match.

Back to Fatullah after the morning drama and Mohammedan opener Junaid Siddique savaged the Young Pegasus bowling attack, smashing seven fours and a six in his 80-run knock. Faisal Hossain also threw his bat around, helping the giants reach 164 for eight in 20 overs.

Young Pegasus, facing their third defeat in a row, were never likely to win the match as national captain Habibul Bashar turned bowling hero taking three wickets as the promoted side were duly restricted to 103-8. This gave Mohammedan their third win in a row.

Victoria rode on Hasanuzzaman Rosel's 73 who struck eight fours

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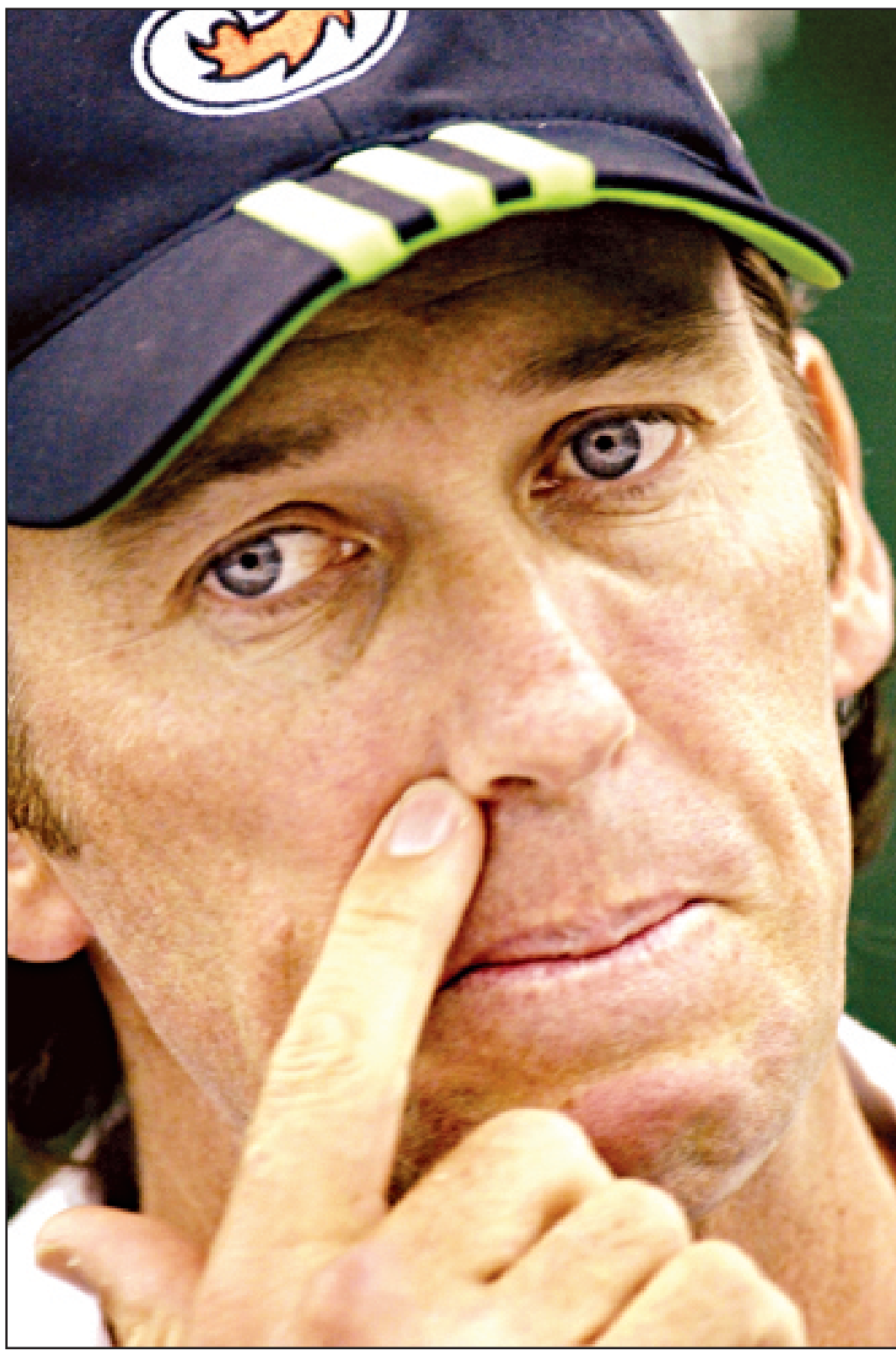


PHOTO: AFP

Australian paceman Glenn McGrath announces his retirement during a press conference in Melbourne on Saturday.

Raihan spins BKSP to title

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-arm spinner Raihan Anas bowled BKSP to a massive 104-run victory against Dhaka to clinch the title of the National Cricket Championship at the BKSP ground yesterday.

He had figures of 5 for 25 in 9.2 overs as Dhaka were bundled out for 86 in 35.2 overs in reply to BKSP's 190 all out in 45.3 overs. Raihan, who had also contributed a valuable unbeaten 24, was adjudged man-of-the-final.

Earlier, Shamsul Arefin took five wickets for 48 to wrap up the BKSP innings below 200 runs. Number eight batsman Latiful Azam made 33 off 46 balls that had three boundaries but the highest 36 runs were extras.

Nasir Hossain added 27 off 43 balls with four hit to the fence.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BKSP: 190 all out in 45.3 overs (Mashuqur 22, Nasir 27, Raihan 24 not out, Latiful 33, extras 36; Arefin 5-48, Faisal 2-19).

DHAKA: 86 all out in 35.2 overs (Arman 18, Shafi 20, extras 16; Kibria 2-14, Raihan 5-25).

Result: BKSP won by 104 runs.

Clubs angry at Zim tour

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The decision of Bangladesh's tour to Zimbabwe next February sparked dissatisfaction among the Premier Division Cricket League clubs who believe that the absence of national players will make them suffer.

The Tigers are expected to leave for Harare on January 31 to play four one-day internationals as part of their preparation for the World Cup to be held in the West Indies in March-April. The 11-day trip means that at least 14 top cricketers will not be available for clubs after seven or eight rounds of the most coveted domestic competition involving 12 teams.

Abahani, who spend a lot of money this year to revive their pride and have roped in players like Khaled Mashud, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tushar Imran from national pool, were the first team to criticise the board's 'surprise' decision of sending the team to Zimbabwe.

"National interest definitely comes first but our question is why the board didn't disclose it earlier

to the clubs," said Abahani official Jalal Yunus last night.

He also questioned the merit of the trip itself.

"I believe that it would be far better to play in the highly competitive local league rather than playing against a weak international opponent before the World Cup," claimed the Abahani official.

"We don't mind if the board could have arranged a series against a tougher opponent or some practice matches in the Caribbean. Besides, this tour will take the gloss off the league to a great extent which is not a healthy practice," he said adding that his club will submit a written complain to the authority along with other clubs like Mohammediya, Sonargaon Cricketers' and Victoria.

While Jalal blamed the board for keeping them in the dark about the prospect of the tour, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) general secretary Mahbul Anam said that a decision regarding the Zimbabwe tour was conveyed to Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) well before the inter-club cricketers' transfer this month.

"The discussion about the tour

BFF trims nat'l side

SPORTS REPORTER

After a two-day trial, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) reduced their squad to 30 members yesterday for the home and away Olympic pre-qualifiers against Hong Kong.

BFF on last Tuesday announced a 36-member team but brought two changes in the squad after two days, bringing Baten of Youngmen's Fakirpool club and Mohammad Rony of Muktijoddha to the list in place of Rintu of Arambagh and Pappu of Muktijoddha.

The players have been requested to report to manager Amirul Islam and coach Saiful Bari Titu, who looked after the under-23 squad, today at 7pm at the BFF Bhaban.

The two matches will be played on February 7 and 14.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Shakil (Arambagh), Tarek (Brothers), Himel (Badda), Zia (Farashganj)
DEFENDERS: Ariful, Rajan, Saikat, Ripon (Youngmen's), Sony

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Flintoff to ignore pain

REUTERS, Sydney

England captain Andrew Flintoff will battle through painful ankle problems to play in the last two Ashes Tests.

He did not bowl in the nets on Friday but said he was confident about the next match starting in Melbourne on Tuesday.

"The ankle feels good. Obviously, we netted yesterday and I didn't bowl, I will probably bowl tomorrow," Flintoff told reporters in Melbourne on Saturday.

"There's no secret, I've had some discomfort in it over the past week. I'm not envisaging any long-term problems or worried about these next two Test matches."

Flintoff said his team were very

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PHOTO: STAR

Players of BKSP are pleased as punch after their National Cricket Championship triumph over Dhaka in the final at the BKSP-1 ground yesterday.