

Sport

Div II cricket super league

Partex Sporting Club earned an impressive eight-wicket victory over Kathal Bagan Club in the Acme Second Division super league at the Mirpur City Club ground yesterday, reports UNB.

Opting to bat, Kathal Bagan were shot out for 25 in 16.2 overs.

In reply, Partex SC reached their target making 28 for two in 10.3 overs.

In the day's Second Division relegation league, Udyt Club defeated Lalbagh USC by six wickets.

Deciding to bat, Lalbagh USC scored 163 all out in 37.3 overs with Sumon and Rubel making 35 runs each. In reply, Udyt made 167 for four in 36.1 overs with opener Mosharred scoring 46 runs.

Dreaming beyond

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Brentwood where the Bangladesh team is lodging is that the old devil is getting back his form.

Khaled Mashud has always been an inspiration behind the stumps, and he can also bat occasionally.

Then we have the bowlers Hasibul Hossain, Manjur Islam, Neeyamur Rashid and Shaifuddin Ahmed. Some dare to say our weaker department is bowling. But, remember how Sachin T. once floored West Indies in a tournament in India and, more recently, how Ajay Jadeja changed the whole complexion of the match in a single over against England at Sharjah.

It happens all the time in cricket. That's why it is cricket.

The pundits, among them the Bangladesh manager Tanvir Mazhar, are not giving Bangladesh a chance even against Scotland because of the English county players. What an irony! Scottish fortunes boosted by none other than the English.

Admittedly I am no pundit. And, that's why I say, let's go beyond Scotland. Yes, I know the dreaded Loch Ness is not too far up north. To spring a surprise is possible if all our players click and the entire opposition - whatever their might - fails. It can happen because this is cricket.

Cutting the root

From Page 13

had been the case with the Wills International Cup cricket tournament.

The BCB-BFF tug of war over control of the Bangabandhu National Stadium has gone too far, and the taxpayers are bearing the brunt of it. Moving back and forth from football to cricket only suggests that the council has not made up its mind on which to give priority to, though, even to a layman's eyes, the choice is very simple.

Over the years, barring a couple of titles in some sub-standard tournaments, that too, at the regional level, our footballers have been anything but promising. Finishing second to India in the SAF football championship could, in no way, be taken as an encouraging sign that some day our footballers would rub shoulders with world's best. Qualification for the World Cup could only be part of the wildest of dreams. The reality, albeit painful, is very simple: our footballers are among the lesser-lings of Asia. Let alone the world. And, it is highly unlikely, they will bring about a dramatic improvement in near future.

Conversely, our cricketers have proved their worth. Despite the fact that they have not produced their best in recent times, still they have done what the footballers will not even dare to imagine. That we have a brighter future in cricket is written clearly on the wall. Everyone sees it, except the NSC people.

Nothing justifies the NSC's inclination towards giving the BFF the leverage. Its obsession has already gone too far. The dispute over the control of the Bangabandhu National Stadium should not have arisen in the first place. Their dilly-dallying is costing the tax-payers millions of taka.

Even more enraging is the BCB's sudden 'softened' stance reflected in the 'gentleman's offer' extended by its secretary-general Syed Ashrafia Haq. In a generous gesture to end the long drawn-out tug of war, the former national cricketer expressed willingness on behalf of the board to settle for the Mirpur Stadium. Does he know what he is talking about? Why then were all the infrastructure development works not centred around the Mirpur Stadium? Does he have the slightest knowledge of the money its proposed transfer of venue would involve? What happens to the enhanced floodlight system, electronic scoreboard?

One of the country's Bengali dailies recently reported that the International Cricket Council had been made aware of the change of guards at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and that the game's governing body was not too elated about the dramatic development. For a nation aspiring to get the Test status, what is needed first and foremost is an effective governing body for cricketing affairs. The BCB-BFF tussle plus the NSC obsession with stop-gap arrangements are doing the country's prospects more harms than good.

The Bangabandhu National Stadium is the heart of the country's cricketing activities, and should remain so. Towards getting the coveted Test status, Bangladesh has to prove it has the requisite domestic set-up and adequate infrastructure. Workers digging up pitches on completion of the cricket season to make way for football is not an inspiring sight. More than anything else, it smacks of myopic vision on the part of the policy-planners at the NSC.

Preserving a dream, paying the dues

Iresh Zaker

The hour is upon us. Our boys will be taking the world stage in a few, short days. But where we should have been bursting with unbridled enthusiasm and overwhelming anticipation, we are mired in a sense of impending doom. The pessimism and disappointment is justified. The Bangladesh team has done precious little since their historic win at the ICC championships, two years ago. Whereas Kenya was on even keel with us then, they have managed to exact unchallenged domination over us in recent encounters. Our pride has understandably been choked.

Recently, there has been a tendency to put all the blame on the players. They have been charged with leniency in their duties, spoiled behaviour and the lack of courage and vim. Furthermore, we have started to believe and this was most evident in the team manager's farewell speech before the team went to England that our players lack the pure cricketing ability that is required to succeed at the top level. The disappointment is beyond contention. The players are definitely not above reproach. They are after all the ones who are playing. However, if we want a full picture of why things have gone wrong we must look at other clue sources as well.

The cricket authorities of Bangladesh have been indulging in much self-pathy of late. They claim that much money and effort has been put into the team recently. Anyone of them will provide grand financial figures regarding the national team with great alacrity. And now they feel that they deserve the box seats at Lord's more than the players deserve a place on the field. But how about we look at some of the things that the esteemed BCB officials have not done in the last couple of years.

One of the first things that a team needs in international cricket these days is a technical knowledge bank. This preferably includes a technical adviser for the team but more importantly it covers extensive knowledge about each and every potential playing condition, eradication about mental, physical and cricketing abilities of the opposition players the team might be required to face, thorough assessment of its own players' potential and exact ideas about how to deal with any playing situation.

For this the team needs a ready source of video and literary material that will provide them with information about the foreign teams and conditions and a system of recording the data concerning its own players. It is not possible to do well in international cricket without such arrangements. Nowadays, the acquirement

of such a system in place under which the players can gather knowledge about the opposition. There are no video sources, no literary sources, nothing, zilch, didly squat. One would be kind to forgive the expletives but many would find that this situation is very appalling.

How can our players go and face the best players in the world without any sort of technical knowledge about their opposition? More importantly why have not the much vaunted cricketing experts of Bangladesh grasped this idea till now? One would definitely feel that the setting up of a technical bank would be within the means of a Board that can arrange one of the biggest tournaments in the world. Maybe the thinking among authorities is that our players are not educated enough to make proper use of technical facilities and slaughtering the boys whenever we fail. For there will be failures, many more before we can succeed. We should not let that turn our dream into a meler of pointed fingers.

Each quarter in Bangladesh, the players, writers, coaches and officials need to look within themselves and set right what they have been doing wrong. For they are in charge of the hopes of a nation. They are in charge of something that is too big to ensnare in a mire of useless criticism. Cricket in Bangladesh needs dreamers and workers. It cannot afford destructive critics.

Good luck to our boys on the glorious mission that lies ahead of them. Success may not be there. But their hearts should be. For a collective heart of 130 million people is beating with theirs.

Changed Champs?



LONDON, May 10: Sri Lanka have threatened to abandon the pinch-hitting strategy which took them to World Cup glory in 1996, says a report on internet.

Coach Dav Whatmore, now in charge at Lancashire, masterminded the strategy which enabled the Sri Lankan openers to set a hot pace at the start of their innings.

"But with the ball moving around so much, it may not be right to go for the shots from the start," said team manager Dulleep Mendis.

"It could be wise to build the innings and keep wickets in hand. The idea is to put up a big score."

The Sri Lankans, taking advantage of the slow wickets in the Indian sub-continent during the last World Cup, ran up scores of 100-plus in the first 15 overs when field restrictions were in force.

Their top-order batsmen, left-hander Sanath Jayasuriya and Aravinda De Silva, were encouraged to attack from the start and regularly seized the initiative before the opposition had even warmed up.

The cold, seaming conditions of England, however, have prompted a rethink for Arjuna Ranatunga's men, with batsmen urged to take fewer risks early on before going for their strokes.

Meanwhile, the experienced Roshan Mahanama could get a further chance to press his claims for a place in the World Cup.

He returned to the side with an unbeaten 142 off 145 balls in yesterday's warm-up against Nottinghamshire and will hope for more valuable practice when Sri Lanka take on Leicestershire at Grace Road tomorrow.

Mahanama only got his chance to play yesterday after Kaluwitharana suffered a neck injury.

Leicestershire coach Jack Cristina claims

Warsaw Cup

WARSAW, May 10: Spain's Cristina Torrens-Valero, the world number 81, beat Argentina's Ines Gorrochategui 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) to capture the 112,500-dollar Warsaw Cup here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Torrens-Valero earned 16,000 dollars and 80 ranking points for her first every victory on the Tour.

"I am very happy," she said after the match. "Particularly as I was not one of the favourites for the tournament."

The Grace Road clash is arguably the pick of the penultimate round of warm-up matches before the tournament proper starts when England play the defending champions at Lord's on Friday.

Birkenshaw, who has masterminded Leicestershire's two County Championship successes in three years, is a great admirer of the Sri Lankans and reckons this is the perfect opportunity for his men to prove themselves.

He said: "We will just be glad to get a game of cricket, especially against a side like Sri Lanka who are strong in all departments. They have a very positive approach to the game and they have some super cricketers."

Leicestershire's attack will be depleted by the absence of Chris Lewis and Mike Kasprowicz while wicketkeeper Paul Nixon will undergo a test on a thumb injury, although the county will be strengthened by the experience of a pre-season tour to Sri Lanka earlier this year.

In deciding not to play for NSW from next summer I am entirely satisfied that I have made the correct decision, however emotionally difficult it has been, to bring to an end what has been a thoroughly enjoyable and satisfying career in NSW cricket."

"When I retired from Test cricket back in February I said that I would be spending the next few months considering my future as a NSW player in the light of developing a new business career coupled with spending more time with my family," Taylor wrote in the letter.

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"When you look at who is going to make a difference to a side, you look at the all-rounder because it solves two problems in one. You don't have the problem of 'shall we pick a batter who-bowls-a-bit' or the reverse."

"New Zealand had a wonderful

World Cup mock at hosts

LONDON, May 10: An on-song Cairns could be the Kiwi key. It's no surprise that David Gower insists that you must thank God for genuine all-rounders, says a report on internet.

And New Zealand leader Stephen Fleming has plenty of gratitude that he will have such a commodity at his disposal during the World Cup - none other than the muscular-hitting, sharp-bowling Chris Cairns.

Cairns, 28, had three spells at Nottinghamshire, but will deliver his first ball in England in Kiwi colours in their opening match against Bangladesh at Chelmsford. Contrastingly his father, Lance, played six of his 43 Tests in this country.

Gower, who played plenty of cricket against Cairns senior, believes that if Cairns junior hits the right form note, he could play a vital role in the tournament.

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Pakistan are tipped by many, including former England fast bowler Freddie Trueman, to add another World Cup to their 1992 title.

They are drawn in a separate preliminary group from England but the teams could meet in the second stage of the tournament, which begins on Friday.

Mushtaq's comments may appear undiplomatic, but some of the British media share his views. The Observer newspaper on Sunday published a list of 10 reasons why England would not win the Cup. They included poor batting, "pedestrian" fielding and bowlers who performed like "a bunch of pie throwers."

Ian Austin of Lancashire is one of the more controversial selections. A genial medium-paced seamer, he is 33 but has only emerged over the past season and has played just four one-dayers.

"There are people like Mark Ramprakash, Dean Headley and Chris Lewis who are the right age. But England picks them and discards them for no apparent reason," he said.

The England selectors say he is a match-winner in English conditions but in Australia recently he was described as an

No Lara at Lara's ground!

EDGBASTON, England, May 10: Brian Lara was left to ponder over the good old days here on Monday as fitness worries surrounding the West Indian captain continued before the cricket World Cup, reports AFP.

Therefore, the officials would probably be better served to point towards their own lack of initiative rather than singling out the supposed inherent incapability of the cricketers. No matter what the argument is from the BCB front, nothing can warrant the absolute lack of any effort to provide players with valuable ancillary facilities such as technical support.

Would they now suggest that the absence of a proper gym or an exclusive stadium for the national team is also the reason of the players not possessing higher academic degrees?

Some have suggested in the last few weeks that Bangladesh is sending out the worst team in the country's history to play in this World Cup. Those who charged this were probably using thought facilities that do not reside in their skull. For this is the team that won the ICC trophy for the first time in the nation's history. This is the team that beat the West Indies "A" side in a one-day series at home. And this is the team that we merely expect to score over 200 against any opposition. One cannot say the same about any Bangladesh team of the past.

It was at Edgbaston five years ago that Lara, fresh from hitting a world record Test score of 375 against England in Antigua, had turned out for Warwickshire against Durham in an English county match and made history again, his 501 coming in a run of seven centuries in eight first-class matches.

The West Indies begin their Cup campaign against Pakistan on Sunday.

Lara's injury is all the more worrying in that it comes just after the left-hander had rediscovered his best form after a 12-month slump.

He scored consecutive innings of 213, 153 not out and 100 in the drawn home series against Australia in March before getting hurt.

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