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- Who will be the match referee in the Bangladesh's inaugural Test against India next month?
Shepherd (Subba Row) (Bucknor)
- Who will be the Princess Cup tennis title?
Serena (Hings) (Dokle)
- Who is the new managing director of United Cricket Board of South Africa?
Peter Pollock (Gerald) (Duncan Fletcher)
- Who won the Shaheed Major Nazmul Haq International rating chess title?
Rozal (Rakib) (Rajeeb)
- Who is new cricket coach of Zimbabwe?
Houghton (Rackemann) (Pycroft)

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SPORTS TALK



Workers removing part of the top soil of the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday as part of preparation of cricket pitches for Bangladesh's inaugural Test against India. — Star photo by Amran Hossain

Alam's cause for concern

Sports Reporter

Alam Chowdhury, secretary of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's Grounds Committee, has suggested that although the wicket at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) for the historic one-off Test match against India will be a good one, the outfield however, might not be in proper shape by November 10.

Alam yesterday made the comment after the National Sports Council (NSC) granted the Board use of the internationally-recognised venue for Test cricket, which up till now was under the jurisdiction of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for the last three months.

"We have two unaffected pitches on the eastern side. Any one can be utilised for the five-day match since both pitches have been praised by visiting teams for their sporting nature," said Alam while talking exclusively to *Daily Star Sport*.

"The number one strip was used for the Independence Cup final between India and Pakistan in January 1998, while inaugural ICC Knockout final between South Africa and West Indies was played on the pitch beside.

Alam though lamented that the number three strip, which was used for the first-ever Asian Test Championship final between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in March last year, would not be available as half of it bore the brunt of the Premier Division Football League season so far.

It is worth noting that the match contained two double centuries by Pakistan middle order batsmen Ijaz Ahmed (211) and Inzamam-ul-Haq (200 n.o.) as well as a hat-trick by the 'sultan of swing' Wasim Akram. Pakistan won the final by an innings and 175 runs.

Alam was more concerned about the state of the outfield and the lack of time to bring it up to scratch.

"I honestly fear that within this short three-week period one cannot possibly lay a new outfield," complained the former Kalabagan player.

"It requires at least six months for new grass seeds to grow. So my only option is to fill up the holes left by those boots with sand," said Alam adding, "But such a remedy can in no way do justice to the name of the gentleman's game."

Prior to his departure for Nairobi, BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury had also expressed his disappointment at the brief allotment of BNS to cricket.

"We had sought at least five weeks to get the stadium into shape. But unfortunately NSC has given us only three weeks time. This is absolutely insufficient to prepare a ground of international standard," he said.

The Board however is going to stage a series of events to celebrate the historic Test.

Cairns' greatest innings

NAIROBI, Oct 16 (Internet report): This was the stuff legends are made of. Chris Cairns' undefeated hundred against India in the final of the International Cricket Council Knockout Trophy will not be forgotten by those present at the Nairobi Gymkhana in a hurry.

He blanked the clueless Indians virtually on one leg. The mere statistics that he faced 113 balls and hit nine fours and two sixes for his 102 do no justice to the spirit of the man. It was like climbing a mountain with a physical handicap, and Cairns accomplished exactly that.

"This one is my greatest ever. I have been playing for a few years now, am growing old as well. New Zealand was in the final of such a big event for the first time and the feeling can't be described. There is nothing to top this one. Certainly this is my greatest ever," Cairns said.

The star who confirmed his status as one of the greatest all-rounders of the world, said he was lucky to get three to four days to recuperate from the knee injury before the final. "I had a hard session with the team physio and I underwent a long training session. I felt all right after the session and decided I would play," he said.

He bowled his full quota of ten overs as well, conceding just 40 runs, but it was completely overshadowed by the magnificent hundred that he scored. Cairns said he was not too worried about the target as the ground was quite small. "At the end of the Indian innings I thought chasing 265 won't be that difficult on this ground as 260 here would mean 220 on a bigger ground," he said.

Cairns said his decision to play was "an emotional one". He said, "I really took it upon myself."

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China bury Indonesia

TRIPOLI, Lebanon, Oct 16: China used the pressure on coach Bora Milutinovic here Monday, outclassing minnows Indonesia 4-0 in their Asian Cup Group B match, reports AFP.

China, lucky to sneak a 2-2 draw against South Korea in their opening match on Friday, produced a far more composed performance against much weaker opposition.

The result puts the Chinese on top of Group B with four points, with Kuwait and South Korea both due to play later Monday.

The victory also came as welcome relief to China's globe-trotting coach Milutinovic, who is hoping to get his team into a winning groove.

Milutinovic has been hired with the long-term job of taking China to the 2002 World Cup finals, but after a patchy start to his tenure could not have afforded a poor result against one of Asia's weaker teams.

The match was effectively won within ten minutes of the kick-off, with China exploiting some lamentable Indonesian defending to race into a commanding 3-0 lead.

Midfielder Li Ming opened China's account, tapping in to head home a cross from Xu Yulong in the third minute.

Five minutes later China doubled their tally with a penalty.

Indonesia defender Warsidi (Eds: one name) lunged recklessly at Eintracht Frankfurt striker Yang Chen, leaving Lebanese referee Ayad Nabil no option but to point to the spot.

Shen Si stepped up to blast in past Indonesian keeper Hendro Kartiko and make it 2-0.

The shell-shocked Indonesian defence looked vulnerable whenever China attacked down the wings and their weakness on the flanks was in evidence for the third goal.

Li Tie curled in a cross from the right and the impressive Yang ghosted away from his marker to head in goal number three.

Yang was a constant menace to the Indonesian defence, creating space with some intelligent darting runs off the ball. His attacking partner Su also kept the Indonesian defenders on their toes.

Indonesia, who had surprised Kuwait on Friday when they battled to a valiant 0-0 draw, never looked like causing the same sort of problems for the Chinese.

Hong Kong-based striker Rochi Putiray had a shot well-blocked on 20 minutes and Selamat Riadi saw a 30-yard shot skim the bar shortly before half-time, but those two chances aside, Chinese keeper Jiang Jin was not tested.

China created plenty of chances to increase their lead. Yang hammering a shot against the post on the stroke of half-time and Li Tie snatching a shot against the bar shortly after the interval.

China were able to dictate the pace of play throughout the second half and seemed content to conserve energy with an eye on Thursday's final match against the Kuwaitis.

Qi Hong wrapped up the scoring in the 90th minute, linking into the box to sidefoot home.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Japan v Uzbekistan (8.00 pm BST)
Saudi Arabia v Qatar (10.45 pm BST)
The matches will be shown live on Channel 1

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Next comes one-dayers for Naimur's men

Sports Reporter

After losing the lone first-class match against modest provincial side Griqualand West by 82 runs on Sunday, Bangladesh take on South Africa President's Eleven in the first of three limited-overs matches at Bloemfontein tomorrow.

Originally the Test babes were scheduled to play South Africa A, but the United Cricket Board (UCB) decided to field two different selections under the banner of President's Eleven to face Naimur Rahman's team.

South African Test player Dale Benkenstein will lead the President's Eleven.

The second match is at Pietermaritzburg on October 21 while the final game will be held in Durban on October 23.

Hooper declares himself available

UNDATED, Oct 16 (Internet report): All-rounder Carl Hooper has confirmed he would come out of retirement to play for the West Indies again.

The player, who bats in the middle order and is more capable of bowling some accurate off-spin, quit the international scene in 1999 during the one-day series against Australia.

But with the team in a transitional period after suffering their first series defeat against England for 30 years, Hooper has perhaps sensed the need for a steadying hand.

"Of course I'll play. I have always been proud to represent West Indies and even though I retired, nothing has changed," Hooper said.

"If the selectors think I can still do a job in some shape or form of course I'll play. I don't know what the selectors are thinking. It's up to them."

Former West Indies coach Viv Richards has called for Hooper's return, while other pundits have even suggested he could come back as captain.

Wright's India job confirmed?

WELLINGTON, Oct 16 (Internet report): Former New Zealand cricket captain John Wright has been appointed coach of India, an Indian newspaper reported on Sunday.

Wright was to take up his two-year appointment from November 1 and had the support of India's senior players such as captain Sourav Ganguly, vice-captain Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar and Anil Kumble, the *Deccan Chronicle* said.

Former Australian coach Geoff Marsh, a leading contender, pulled out from the race because his wife was not eager to go to India.

Other candidates were Australians Greg Chappell and Dean Jones.

Wright's first task was to prepare the team for a one-off Test against Bangladesh in early November.

India's stop-gap coach Anshuman Gaekwad - who guided the team to a runner-up finish behind New Zealand in the ICC Trophy in Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday - would be Wright's understudy.

The paper said Wright had got the thumbs up from the senior players when they met Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president A.C. Murli in Nairobi.

Ganguly, while playing for Lancashire this season, had even spoken about the position with Wright, the paper said.

With Wright's position "almost confirmed", the BCCI had stopped conducting interviews for the coach's post.

Wright, New Zealand's second highest run scorer in Tests, has been coach of English county side Kent for the past three years.

The 44-year-old Wright was last year overlooked for the New Zealand coaching job and was also approached to put his name forward for the England job that eventually went to Duncan Fletcher.

England come to Pakistan Teams talk cricket

KARACHI, Oct 16: Pakistan and England Monday pledged to set aside past bitterness and off-field problems and focus on competitive cricket before the one-day and Test series starting this month, reports AFP.

"We are here to play competitive cricket and I am not bothered about past history and any off-field problems," England captain Nasser Hussain told a news conference after the team's arrival earlier.

Shortly before the two-month tour Pakistani players face another match-fixing inquiry concerning their two controversial defeats in last year's World Cup matches against Bangladesh and India.

On the other hand the tourists face a pay cut from England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the problem may aggravate.

England's first tour of Pakistan in 13 years includes three limited-overs internationals, three Tests and five side games.

The first one-day international is on October 24 in Karachi.

England's last tour in 1987 was nearly cancelled when a day's play was lost in the Faisalabad Test after then England captain Mike Gatting and Pakistani umpire Shakoor Rana engaged in a verbal row.

"I was at school in 1987 and what I am bothered about is recent history of the two teams and how the wicket would behave at Faisalabad," said Hussain, born in Chennai, India, about the Faisalabad incident.

Five players - Michael Atherton, Michael Vaughan, Dominick Cork, Paul Nixon and Ian Salisbury - will join the team for the Test series later this month.

Hussain dismissed ace Pakistani pacer Wasim Akram's view that England stand no chance in Pakistan.

"What Wasim said is his view but we have to be at our best as we counter different conditions and a good Pakistan side."

Akram had said Pakistani spinners could bowl England to a 3-0 whitewash.

England have not won a series against Pakistan since their 2-1 home win in 1982. Pakistan beat them in England in 1987, 1992 and 1996.

Pakistan also won the 1987-88 series 1-0.

"We have a good opportunity to play quality spinners and our spinners also have a good chance to prove their worth," Hussain said.

England recently beat the West Indies 3-1 in the five-Test home series while Pakistan lost their last three home series.

Hussain praised Pakistan's cricket culture.

"It's a total different culture and you are celebrity unlike in England. We have no off-field worries like food and security," he said.

Coach Duncan Fletcher said

the ongoing pay dispute with the English board would not bother the players.

"We leave this for the management and players are focussed for the series ahead," Fletcher said.

ECB and Professional Cricketers' Association are scheduled to meet on October 23 to settle the pay cut issue.

The board announced it will make up the three-million-pound shortfall caused in the West Indies series in which three Tests finished inside three days.

Pakistan captain Moin Khan said a new match-fixing inquiry would not affect players.

"I think any such things like match-fixing inquiry enhance the players' resolve and they play hard to prove such allegations wrong," he said.

The ECB chairman had recently demanded six players including Wasim Akram - fined in Justice Malik Mohammad Qayyum's inquiry in May - be banned for life.

The Pakistan Cricket Board last week asked the head of state to order an inquiry into match-fixing allegations in Pakistan's two World Cup outings.

The one-day contingent includes: Nasser Hussain (captain), Mark Alleyne, Andy Caddick, Mark Ealham, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Graeme Hick, Vikram Solanki, Matthew Hoggard, Alec Stewart, Marcus Trescothick, Graham Thorpe and Craig White.

Coach: Duncan Fletcher, assistant coach: M. Moxon, Manager: P. Neale, Physio: P. Conway, physio: Stock III, Media Relations Officer: D. Clarke.

Former captain Michael Atherton, pacer Dominic Cork, leg spinner Ian Salisbury, batsman Michael Vaughan and reserve wicket-keeper Paul Nixon will join the side later for the Test series.



Pakistan cricket captain Moin Khan (L) presenting his England counterpart Nasser Hussain with an autographed bat by his team during a press conference in Karachi yesterday. — AFP photo

'Cronje a brave man'

NAIROBI, Oct 16 (Reuters): Pakistan all-rounder Wasim Akram, himself under a cloud of suspicion, described former South African captain Hansie Cronje as "a brave man" on the eve of an ICC meeting to discuss cricket's match-fixing scandal.

The United Cricket Board of South Africa said last week it would ban Cronje for life after he admitted to the King Commission that he had taken money from bookmakers.

"He is a brave man," Akram told the news agency this weekend. "He admitted at least that he did something wrong."

When asked whether Cronje had been treated unfairly compared with Australia's Shane Warne and Mark Waugh, Akram said: "Yes. If you see it as a comparison then definitely."

Warne and Waugh were fined in 1995 after accepting money from an Indian bookmaker in exchange for pitch and weather information during a one-day series in Sri Lanka.

Akram was one of a number of Pakistani players who were censured and fined for either bringing the game into disrepute or failing to cooperate with an inquiry into match-fixing.

Former Pakistani fast-bowler Ataur-Rehman has alleged that Akram paid him to underperform during a one-day clash against New Zealand in 1994. Rehman has been banned for

instances mentioned in the report. He says the refusal to pay the fine does not relate to the amount of money involved, but is based purely on a principle.

Meanwhile, Akram claims that while he has a new young tearaway fast bowler to step into the injured Shoaib Akhtar's shoes.

Akram named him as Abdul Sami, an 18-year-old who bowled to the Pakistani players in the nets before they left for Kenya to play in the ICC knockout tournament.

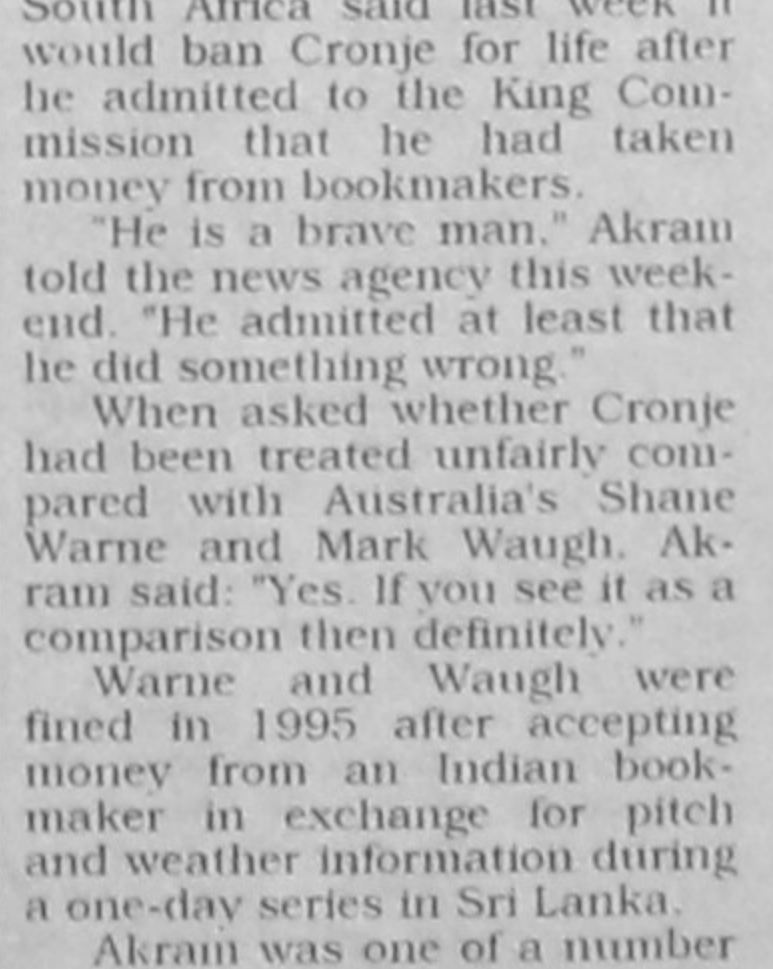
It is claimed that he is at least as quick as Shoaib, but all the talk may be part of a psychological game, such as Shane Warne claiming some years ago he had discovered a new delivery to add to his armoury.

Whether or not this new fast bowler is fact or fiction, Akram is happy to give the youngster his stamp of approval, saying that he would be happy to see him bowl in the Tests against England.

JU soccer

SAVAR, Oct 16: Archaeology reached the final of the Jahangirnagar University inter-department football competition beating Geography & Environment 3-1 in the first semifinal at the university playground today, report UNB.

Ujjal, Mithu and Muku Tuhin netted the lone goal for the losers.



WASIM AKRAM



Indonesian Rochi Putiray (C) breaking through Chinese Qi Hong (L) and Wu Chengyong during their Asian Cup Group B first round encounter in Beirut yesterday. — AFP photo