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Agherri Mubana Saqiri

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2 Pak imps scrutinised

KARACHI, Dec 25 (Internet report) The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is contemplating nominating new umpires on the International Cricket Council (ICC) following an adverse report given by the match referee about Riazuddin and Mian Aslam.

Australian Barry Jarman, who was match referee for the one-day series between Pakistan and England in November, has made adverse comments about the umpiring by Riazuddin and Mian Aslam, both of whom were involved in some poor decisions.

While Riazuddin stocked everyone by declaring Alec Stewart caught behind in the first one-dayer at Karachi, Mian Aslam gave an outrageous leg before against Nasser Hussain in the Rawalpindi match. Aslam was also involved in giving more dubious decisions in the Faisalabad Test match.

Riazuddin and Aslam are the current Pakistani umpires on the ICC panel in fact the former has been assigned to supervise in the ongoing Test series between South Africa and Sri Lanka. A PCB official confirmed that Barry Jarman had given a very poor report about the two umpires and thus the Board was considering appointing new ones on the ICC panel. Saleem Badr and Z I Pasha have both been given good ratings by the match referee and we believe our best umpires should be representing us on the international panel.

He said Saleem Badr had been given an unfair deal in recent times and should not have been removed from the ICC panel by the Board. We have to take such steps because all this does not bring a good name to Pakistan cricket.

Ironically, while Mian Aslam does have a poor track record as umpire even at the domestic level Riazuddin for sometime now has been considered the best in Pakistan even by visiting teams. But he seems to have run into bad form as earlier this year also he was involved in a controversy with the Sri Lankans during the Karachi Test in March when they complained about him to the match referee.

Rookies showing prowess

Hasan Masood

The second edition of the Green Delta National Cricket League has so far been an incredible time for the young guns.

Unknown Muhammad Sharif has made a name for himself in the top flight competition with a basket full of wickets. Rafiqul Islam, Nafis Iqbal and Anisur Rahman outshone established names like national stalwarts Aminul Islam, Mehrab Hossain and Akram Khan with the bat.

The arrival of fresh blood in the three-day format ushers in a bright future for our fledgling cricket.

Sharif of Bangladesh Biman took a staggering 30 wickets in six longer-version games. The right-arm medium-pace bowler who has proven to be deceptively quick and dangerous with the old ball, is also turning in to a useful batsman.

Having played in the Second Division League for Partex last season, athletic Sharif has the best bowling average as he conceded only 12.23 runs per wicket against Enamul's 14.16.

The first leg was otherwise dominated by left-arm spinners. In fact, the top ten list contains five of them.

Enamul apart, Manzurul Islam Rana of Khulna, Sharfuddinul Islam Shahid Saikat of Dhaka Metropolis, Imran Farhat of Biman and Ahsanullah Hasan of Barisal found themselves in the rankings.

Pakistan leg-spinner Shahid Mahmud, who took highest 50 wickets last season, has also managed a place in the elite list by taking 28

Top ten run-getters in the three-day matches of the Green Delta National Cricket League 2000-2001 first leg:

Batsman/Team	M	I	NO	Runs	HS	100s	50s	Ave
Imran Farhat(Bim)	6	10	2	735	216	2	3	91.87
Rafiqul Islam (Raj)	6	12	2	455	124	1	3	37.91
Minhazul Abedin(Ctg)	5	7	1	390	137	1	3	55.71
Anisur Rahman(Kaj)	6	12	2	390	70	-	3	32.50
Javed Omar (Bim)	5	8	-	388	102	1	3	48.50
Nafis Iqbal(Ctg)	6	8	1	385	147	1	2	55.00
Sajad Alamed(DM)	6	9	1	362	117	1	2	45.25
Hannan Sarkar(Bari)	6	11	-	343	100	1	1	31.18
Sajjadul Alam(Khu)	6	11	2	342	147	1	1	38.00
Shafayetul Islam(Bari)	6	11	2	303	105*	1	-	33.66

Top ten wicket-takers in the three-day matches of the Green Delta National Cricket League 2000-2001 first leg:

Bowler/Team	M	O	M	Runs	W	BB	5W	Ave
Enamul Hoque(Ctg)	5	225.4	79	439	31	6/36	3	14.16
M Sharif(Bim)	6	140	33	367	30	6/31	2	12.23
S Mahmud(Ctg)	6	197	26	675	28	5/37	3	24.10
Manzurul Islam(Khu)	6	216.1	77	404	27	6/24	3	14.96
SIS Saikat(DM)	6	214.4	78	360	25	6/45	1	14.40
Imran Farhat(Bim)	6	142.2	28	474	23	7/31	2	20.60
M Ashraf(Dha)	6	212.2	48	599	22	6/49	2	27.22
A Hasan(Bari)	5	143	40	404	21	8/76	2	19.23
Saiful Islam(Dha)	5	144	40	342	19	7/62	2	18.00
Aminul J(Raj)	5	158	36	426	18	6/57	1	23.66

Kiwis eyeing turnaround

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Dec 25: New Zealand cricket coach David Trist says a Test victory over Zimbabwe would be tonic for any psychological damage suffered during his side's poor South African tour, reports AP.

Barely returned from their 2-0 Test series loss and 5-0 defeat in the one-dayers against South Africa, New Zealand host Zimbabwe in a one-off Test beginning Tuesday at the Basin Reserve.

Although jaded after an 18-week tour of Singapore, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa, Trist said the players were enthusiastic about the Test and one-day series against Zimbabwe after practice on Christmas Eve and a brief fielding session Monday.

"We've come together pretty late but the guys need a bit of a breather after the tour of South Africa," Trist said. "We have to move on and prepare positively - we have to be right at our best and I think we'll be pretty close to it."

"We need to get on the winning track again."

Weather forecasters are predicting drizzle over the next few days.

"Any rain reduces the possibility of a result," said Trist. We want to get ahead on the first day and stay ahead right through."

Trist remains cautious of Zimbabwe despite New Zealand's 2-0 series win there in September.

"They play a style of cricket that best supports their player base. We have to be patient as well, we need a clinical approach similar to what we used in Zimbabwe."

"They will have high expectations after playing reasonably well in India."

Zimbabwe lost the Test series 1-0 to India but their batting was solid with Andy Flower in strong form with unbeaten scores of 232 and 183 against India.

Flower, a late arrival on tour with his wife Rebecca expecting their baby, said the team was determined to atone for earlier bad performances in Wellington.

"We've been hammered every time we've played here - we have something to prove that we can play in these conditions," said Flower.

New Zealand crushed Zimbabwe by 10 wickets in the first of the 1998 series and Zimbabwe have yet to win a one-day international on the ground.

New Zealand have never lost a Test against Zimbabwe, winning five of the 10 encounters since 1992.

The New Zealand side will be lined up for a final pitch inspection Tuesday with the selectors only having to decide between rookie leg-spinner Brooke Walker or injured all-rounder James Franklin.

Zimbabwe have had to contend with injury and illness since their arrival.

The most serious setback was top-order batsman Grant Flower's fractured finger, sustained while fielding against Canterbury.

He will stay with the team but is not expected to be fit until Zimbabwe play Australia and the West Indies in a tri-series in Australia beginning in January.

Heaven-sent Ridley

MELBOURNE, Dec 25 (Internet report) When Australia met the West Indies at the Recreation Ground in Antigua early last year, the usual array of sights and sounds that make the St John's Test match unique were given an airing. Chickie's Disco rocked the double-decker stand, greeting the umpires with the soundtrack from Hawaii Five-O. Maxfield shimmed his way out of a suitcase. The retiring Gravy wore a dress.

And last year, something more. Never shy in backing their own, the locals wore T-shirts bearing the head of wicket-keeper Ridley Jacobs, with the words, "You've seen da rest, now here's da best."

When their man copped a ball in the face that left him bloodied and bound for hospital, one devotee went out in sympathy by plastering a band-aid across the Jacobs nose on his shirt.

It's easy to see why Jacobs has so much support for his work behind the stumps and with the bat. Since Jeff Dujon's last Test against England at the Oval in 1991, the Windies have gone through keepers like

Dujon used to go through ice-packs after having his hands hammered by Holding, Marshall, Garner and friends.

First there was David Williams, whose biggest impression was that he was so small. Watching Williams stand between a Curtly Ambrose-bouncer and the sightscreen, you'd swear he must have won the job by losing a bet.

Then came the gangly Junior Murray, who never lived up to a famous West Indian name in backstopping and is best remembered in these parts for an interesting crack at opening the batting in the hit-and-giggle a few summers back.

And Courtney Browne, best remembered for something he'd sooner forget. If the debutant hadn't dropped a regulation neck from Steve Waugh, who was on 42 at the time and soldiered to 200, Mark Taylor's men might never have won the Jamaica Test of 1995, and with it the Frank Worrell Trophy. Browne, the reserve keeper on this tour, has played just 12 more Tests.

Then along came Ridley. Or, more accurately, the selectors finally picked him.

Jacobs hails from Swetes, the same village as Ambrose. He first played for Leeward Islands more than a decade ago, and averages 40 with the bat at first-class level. Yet he didn't list his first Test until two years ago. Dujon, in his understated manner, says: "He got his opportunity a bit late."

The baptism was ferocious. Flying to South Africa for the 1998-99 series, the West Indies stopped over in London, booked



RIDLEY JACOBS

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C'wealth Bank Academy due on January 5

Sports Reporter

The Commonwealth Bank Cricket Academy will arrive in Dhaka on January 5.

Although the Australian national side led by Steve Waugh came to Bangladesh in 1998 to feature in the inaugural ICC Knockout tournament, the Academy will be the first side from Down Under to play against the Test babies.

During their 22-day visit the famous institute run by legendary wicketkeeper Rodney Marsh, will play two three-dayers, a four-day match as well as four one-day games against different selections.

The visitors will kick off the tour on January 7 with a three-day encounter against the Bangladesh youth team at the BKSP. They will travel to Rajshahi on January 12 to play their second three-day outing against Bangladesh Under-25. Before heading back to the capital they will play a limited-overs match.

The lone four-day fixture will be against Bangladesh's second string side at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The tourists will also play three day-night matches most likely against Bangladesh A at the same venue on January 22, 23 and 25 respectively.

The tourists will leave Dhaka on January 26.

ITINERARY

Date	Match	Venue
January 7-9	3-day	BKSP
January 12-14	3-day	Rajshahi
January 15	one-day	Rajshahi
January 17-20	4-day	Dhaka
January 22	day/night	Dhaka
January 23	day/night	Dhaka
January 25	day/night	Dhaka

Age-group cricket meets on Jan 10

Sports Reporter

The age-group tournaments under the development programme of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will commence at different venues across the country on January 10.

The under-13 competitions will be held in Dhaka and Chittagong. Sattur and Rajshahi will host the under-15s while the under-17s will be played in Dhaka and Mvnsingh.

Twelve teams, two each from the six divisions, will compete in all three age-group tournaments. Bangladesh Kriya Shikha Pratishthan (BKSP) will however be the thirteenth team in under-15 and under-17 section.

India going to Pakistan on January 8?

KARACHI, Dec 25: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Lieutenant General Tauqir Zia said Monday he had received positive signals that India's cricket team could undertake a short tour of Pakistan next month.

"I have had no direct contacts with any official of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) recently but through a Pakistani official in England I have been conveyed that Indians intend to come on January 8," General Zia told AFP.

New Delhi recently cancelled a scheduled Pakistan tour by their cricket team between December 27 and February 15, citing Pakistan's support for militants in the insurgency-ridden Indian-administered Kashmir.

"Pakistan's representative in International Cricket Council (ICC) Elian Mani had talked to BCCI chief Anurag Kumble who told him that India is planning a short tour now," Zia said.

India will host Australia in February-March while Pakistan will set off for New Zealand in the second week of February.

"For the sake of Asian cricket and for the sake of millions of fans on both sides we are ready to make all-out efforts and love to host India," Zia said.

Last week the BCCI chief urged the Indian government to review the cancellation of the Pakistan tour.

"I am told that BCCI has written for permission once again and they may come to us with a positive thing on Tuesday or Wednesday."

Malaysian Cricket Association President Tunku Imran, also an official of Asian Cricket Council, was recently in India and he did try to convince the Indian Board about touring Pakistan," Zia said.

Pakistan stands to lose millions of dollars if Indian tour does not materialise.

Indian company Sahara Group has offered Pakistan 10 million dollars for television rights to the series.

No Indian team has visited Pakistan for a full Test tour since 1989-90 Sachin Tendulkar led an Indian team to play only three limited over games in Pakistan in 1997.

Stage set for Murali, Pollock



SANATH JAYASURIYA

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 25: Off-spin wizard Murali Muralitharan can dismiss the nine victims he needs to reach the 200-wicket mark in the first of three Tests against South Africa that starts Tuesday at Kingsmead, reports AP.

It will be his 58th Test match, and should he reach his goal, he will be the second fastest to that mark, behind the great Australian fast bowler Dennis Lillee, who made it in just 55 games.

Shawn Pollock, who will be captaining South Africa for the first time in a Test match in his home town, is also on the verge of a significant milestone. He has taken 198 Test wickets and is set to join Donald (308) as the only other South African to notch 200 victims.

He will be up against a South African batting lineup that has relished the Sri Lankan attack in the past, and he will be bowling on a pitch that famously favours fast bowlers.

However, Muralitharan has yet to find a surface on which he is unable to extract prodigious spin. The bounce of the Kingsmead track will be to his liking, too, as Sri Lanka attempts to wipe their first-ever Test in South Africa.

Of South Africa's middle order, only Neil McKenzie and Lance Klusener have showed a degree of unease against spin. However, McKenzie has struck a rich vein of form, with a debut Test century against New Zealand recently under his belt, and a maiden one-day hundred against Sri Lanka to add to his burgeoning confidence.

Live coverage of the match will begin at 1:55 pm (BST) on Star Sports.

It is precisely South Africa's batting strength that appears to make the home team likely winners in the Kingsmead Test. The hosts have weathered the loss of middle-order stalwarts Hansie Cronje - banned from cricket for match-fixing - and the retired Jonty Rhodes better than Sri Lanka can survive the loss of retiring Arjuna Ranatunga and Aravinda de Silva, who was dropped.

In addition, the genuine fast-bowling talent of South African newcomer Muneke Ngam - when added to the wiles of Pollock, the heart of Makhaya Ntini and the undoubted bowling skills of Jacques Kallis, Klusener and Nicky Boje - makes South Africa tough to beat on home soil.

In Dilhoro Fernando, Sri Lanka appear to have unearthed a bowler faster than teammates Arjuna Zoysa and Chaminda Vaas. It remains to be seen, however, whether he will add to the wicket-taking ability of those two, and whether he will supplement Muralitharan's match-winning skills.

Sri Lanka's batsmen will need to absorb the loss of experience they have suffered, and rely on captain Sanath Jayasuriya, opener Marvan Atapattu and Mahela Jayawardene to add to the 16 Test centuries they have scored between them.

Compared to the 28 Gary Kirsten, Kallis and Darryl Cullinan have scored between them, however, the Sri Lankans appear inexperienced.

In the end, though, the South Africans would do well to remember the visitors have recent series victories against Australia (at home) and Pakistan (away) to their credit.



SHAUN POLLOCK

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA: Gary Kirsten, Boeta Dippenaar, Jacques Kallis, Darryl Cullinan, Neil McKenzie, Mark Boucher, Lance Klusener, Nicky Boje, Shaun Pollock (captain), Makhaya Ntini, Muneke Ngam.

SRI LANKA: Sanath Jayasuriya (captain), Marvan Atapattu, Russel Arnold, Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Tillekeratne Dilshan, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Chaminda Vaas, Muttiah Muralitharan, Dilhoro Fernando, Nuwan Zoysa.

MCG Test starts today



JIMMY ADAMS

MELBOURNE, Dec 25: The Brian Lara menace could cost leg-spinner Stuart MacGill a Test berth Tuesday as Australia prepare to chase their 14th consecutive Test win against the West Indies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), reports AP.

Colin Miller and Andrew Bichel loom as the likely support duo to fast men Glenn McGrath and Jason Gillespie in the Boxing Day Test.

The door opened for Miller after captain Steve Waugh again labelled Lara the key to the West Indies' hopes of stopping Australia's 13-match winning streak.

Lara plundered 182 and 39 in last week's third Test in Adelaide, taking plenty from MacGill, but Miller dismissed him both times as his off-spin tormented the tourists' left-handers.

Bichel's selection hopes also looked bright after Waugh said he was leaning towards playing three quicks on an MCG wicket which had not turned greatly this season.

"There is a chance of playing three fast bowlers, more so than two spinners, but we've still got to wait until later on to see what happens," Waugh said Monday.

"It's going to be a real tough call either way and that's the tough part about being captain."

Waugh declared himself a certain starter Monday after completing another training session.

The skipper was satisfied he had overcome the buttock muscle injury which kept him out of the third Test, leaving Martyn out of the team.

Martyn was one of Australia's best performers in Adelaide but he was resigned to missing selection once Waugh recovered from injury.

Australia have already retained the Frank Worrell Trophy winning the first three Tests, but Waugh is not worried about complacency as his team

match he's played - he's got a great record and a great strike rate," Waugh said.

"He got hit by Brian Lara last match, which happens. Lara went out and went after him and played a few big shots which he got away with and got his confidence going."

"He can do that to any bowler. We've seen it plenty of times before. He tends to go after one bowler and make a bit of a mess of them."

Miller and Bichel have never played a Boxing Day Test and their selection will depend on a team inspection of the MCG pitch and how it has played in other matches there this season.

Black made an impressive Test debut in Brisbane last month but he was dumped after last week's third Test loss in Adelaide, enabling Stuart to join the pace attack of Courtney Walsh, Mervyn Dillon and Nixon McLean.

Stuart, 27, from Guyana played in the West Indies' opening tour match against Western Australia, taking three wickets, but has subsequently struggled for opportunities.

Captain Jimmy Adams said his players were in good spirits despite the disappointment of losing in Adelaide after placing Australia under immense pressure.

It was the tourists' best performance so far and Adams said he was confident his players could again challenge Waugh's record-breakers.

But he admitted his young players had to adjust to the atmosphere at the Boxing Day match, with another crowd of more than 60,000 expected for the showpiece day of Australian cricket.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Steve Waugh (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Michael Slater, Matthew Hayden, Justin Langer, Mark Waugh, Ricky Ponting, Jason Gillespie, Andrew Bichel, Colin Miller, Glenn McGrath, Stuart MacGill (12th man to be named).

WEST INDIES: Jimmy Adams (captain), Sherwin Campbell, Daren Ganga, Wavell Hinds, Brian Lara, Marlon Samuels, Ridley Jacobs, Nixon McLean, Mervyn Dillon, Colin Stuart, Courtney Walsh, Mahendra Nagamootoo (12th man).

Why nightwatchmen?



STEVE WAUGH

MELBOURNE, Dec 25: Australian cricket captain Steve Waugh has vowed to "abandon the tradition" of using nightwatchmen in Test matches, believing the tactic is outdated and pointless, reports Reuters.

Australia have used a nightwatchman in each of this season's three Tests against West Indies but Waugh said he had decided to ban the practice after consulting his teammates.

Lower order batsmen are used as nightwatchmen to protect specialist batsmen when a wicket falls late in a day but Waugh said he could see no

logical reason to continue the habit.

"We've decided as a group we're not going to use it any more," Waugh said.

"We all came to the conclusion that we probably do it just for the sake of it."

Since replacing Mark Taylor as Australian Test captain in 1999, Waugh has shown a genuine willingness to challenge many of the game's conventions.

While most captains prefer to bat first when they win the toss, Waugh invariably chooses to field and has shown little hesitation in throwing the ball to his spinners after just 10 or

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