

Wisdom dawns on BFF

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The uncertainty over the next month's South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship was over yesterday when the BFF (Bangladesh Football Federation) agreed to conditional use of the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The development took place after State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman had called in BFF president SA Sultan and acting general secretary Sirajul Islam Bachchu at his office yesterday.

Rahman, also the National Sports Council chairman, asked them to go ahead with the eight-nation meet, starting on January 10,

and also save at least two cricket pitches.

"We have already contacted BCB advisor Mahub Anam today (Thursday) and we're going to meet tomorrow in the afternoon. Board's Sri Lankan curator will also be present in the meeting," said BFF assistant general secretary and SAFF Championship organising committee secretary Badal Roy yesterday.

"We're now ready to compromise with the measurement of the ground in order to keep the two pitches intact," Badal said.

The SAFF tournament was originally scheduled to be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. But the meet experienced the shifting of venue at the eleventh hour as the NSC failed to upgrade the floodlight system in a year.

Rahman also asked the BFF officials to sit with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials and

settle the matter.

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Rain plays at Hamilton

AFP, Hamilton

Not a ball was bowled on the opening day of the second and last cricket Test between India and New Zealand here on Thursday due to a soggy outfield following overnight rain.

Umpires Asoka de Silva and Daryl Harper inspected the ground conditions three times at the Westpac Park before ruling out the possibility of play.

A delayed start looked on the cards for Friday following afternoon showers.

New Zealand lead 1-0 in the two-Test series following their emphatic 10-wicket victory in the opening match at Wellington last week.

Reuters picks Ronaldo, Serena

REUTERS, London

Ronaldo, who scored both goals in Brazil's 2-0 World Cup final win over Germany, has been voted Reuters sportsman of 2002. World tennis number one Serena Williams, winner of three Grand Slam titles in 2002, is the sportswoman of the year.

Thirty-four sports editors and journalists from 27 countries nominated up to three leading sportsmen of 2002. Each first place choice was awarded three points, second place got two points and third place received one point.

Striker Ronaldo, who came back after three years of injury to score eight goals at the World Cup, won with 63 points out of a total of 102.

German Formula One champion Michael Schumacher came in second with 48 points, while Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong was third with 29 points.

"Ronaldo's comeback from a long injury recovery to become World Cup champion and best scorer will be remembered as one of the greatest sporting achievements of all time," said Andre Fontenelle, a contributing editor at Placar in Brazil.

Sports journalists said Ronaldo's performance at this year's World Cup allowed him to lay to rest the memories of the 1998 France

tournament when Brazil lost 3-0 to France in the final.

"After suffering such a nightmare in the 1998 World Cup, Ronaldo's success four years later was all the more remarkable," said Roger Crutchley at The Bangkok Post.

Other sports editors opted for Michael Schumacher, winner of last year's Reuters poll.

"He dominated the Formula One season ... and even equalled the record of Juan Manuel Fangio with

Jeremy Walker at Asahi Shimbun in Japan voted for four times Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong.

"Winning the Tour de France once is tough enough, but being a multiple champion in surely the world's hardest sports event is an incredible achievement," he said.

US golfer Tiger Woods, five times winner on this year's PGA Tour, received 15 points in the poll.

Woods won the first two major

Grand Prix final, came fifth with 13 points.

Other key sportsmen of the year mentioned in the Reuters poll included swimmer Ian Thorpe and tennis number one Lleyton Hewitt, both Australians, along with Norwegian biathlete Ole Einar Bjoerndalen, who won four gold medals at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

Manos Staramopoulos at Eleftheros Typos in Greece voted for Ronaldo's Real Madrid and Brazil teammate, Roberto Carlos. "Quite simply he won everything this year: the World Cup, the Champions League, Super Cup ... A world class player," he said.

The editors and journalists also nominated up to three leading sportswomen of 2002 under the same points system.

American Williams won with 65 points out of a possible 102 ahead of world marathon record holder Paula Radcliffe who got 58 points. Swedish golfer Annika Sorenstam came third with 27 points.

Williams enjoyed an outstanding season, beating her sister Venus in the finals of the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open.

"Her play during 2002 reached standards no woman has previously achieved," said Joseph Romanos at The Listener in New Zealand.

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Did U Know?

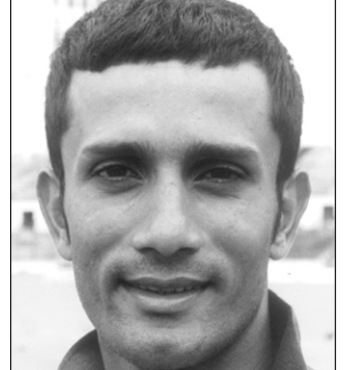
One of India's Test cricketers played under his princely name of Mahajarkumar of Vizianagaram. His name is Vijay Anand.



What to WATCH

ESPN
England vs Sri Lanka
World Series, Fourth ODI
Live at 11:28 am
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports
New Zealand vs India
Second Test, Day Two
Live at 3:50 am
Football Mundial
Taped Version at 5:00 pm
Sportsline Tonight
Sport News
Live at 8:00 pm



Khaled Mashud

(Bangladesh cricket captain) "I want to look at the flip side of the low-scoring match. What is important to me is that we put up a good fight in this match and that's the positive side of this match." On the performance of his side against the West Indies in the second Test in Chittagong.



Scene from the eighth round of the First Division Chess League Lanka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Dramatic Dhaka win

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Dhaka registered their second win in the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea Fourth National Cricket League when they handed Sylhet a four-wicket defeat at the BKSP ground in Savar yesterday.

The victory inside three days of the four-day contest completed a remarkable turnaround for Dhaka after they conceded a first innings lead against Sylhet.

Needing 163 runs to ensure maximum points, Dhaka reached 163-7 in 59.2 overs with middle-order batsman Mazharul Huq hammering an unbeaten 57.

The young right-hander held the innings together after Dhaka were reduced to 43-4. The attacking Mazharul clubbed five fours and a couple of sixes in his disciplined knock. First innings half-century Sajjad Ahmed (22) and wicketkeeper Sajjad Kadir (27) also made significant contributions in the company of Mazharul.

But it was off-spinner Fahim

Muntasir who fashioned Dhaka's victory with a brilliant all-round show.

Man-of-the-match Fahim finished with a match-haul of seven wickets including a superb 4-43 in the second innings to dismiss Sylhet for 144 runs. Besides, he scored exactly 50 in Dhaka's first-innings total of 159.

It was Sylhet's second successive defeat after their 10-wicket drubbing against Rajshahi on December 12.

Chittagong also recorded a ten-wicket win against Barisal at the Fatullah Stadium after a disappointing first game where Khulna forced a draw with the former champions.

Barisal, who found themselves struggling on 61-6 in their second innings, were eventually bowled out for 175. In their first innings they made just 125 and Chittagong responded with a massive 300.

The Barisal second-innings effort only forced Chittagong needing just one run which opener Nafis Iqbal completed in style hitting the fifth ball for four.

Young middle-order batsman Afab Ahmed was adjudged man-of-the-match for his superb 91.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium Khulna defeated Rajshahi by nine wickets.

Resuming the day on 95-5, Rajshahi managed to score 186 in their second innings before being all out in 70.4 overs.

Set to score 221 runs for the win, Khulna achieved the target in 27.1 overs and at the expense of opener Sajjadul Hasan, who scored 43. His partner Salahuddin hammered an unbeaten 39 and Tushar Imran scored a 40-ball 34.

The highlight of the Khulna-Rajshahi match was the return of country's top paceman Mashrafebin Murtaza to competitive cricket after a long time.

Mashrafe, who was out of action for more than a year due to injury, bowling in short spells and with limited pace picked up two wickets in the second innings.

The 17-year-old fast bowler from Narail is confident of getting back into his usual stride before the World Cup in South Africa next February. And already selectors have named him in the 30-man preliminary squad.

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ICC's final offer Waugh uncertain

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

INTERNET, London

The International Cricket Council has presented India with what they describe as a "final offer" in an attempt to end a dispute over player contracts for the World Cup.

They have been involved in discussions with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) over several months, but the two sides have so far been unable to reach agreement.

The main point at issue is a controversial clause in the contracts which prohibits players from endorsing companies or products which may rival the official sponsors for 30 days before and after the tournament.

Only a last-minute compromise prevented India's top players boycotting the ICC Champions' Trophy in September in Sri Lanka.

But although BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya claimed "significant progress" was made at a recent meeting with an ICC delegation, it appears the game's governing body have run out of patience.

They have warned that the BCCI could face claims for damages if they fail to live up to any obligations under the World Cup Participating Nations Agreement, which was signed last year.

In a statement, ICC president Malcolm Gray said: "The ICC has sent two delegations to India to discuss the issue, negotiated a number of significant concessions with its sponsors and sought at all

times to be both flexible and pragmatic in its dealings with the BCCI.

"Despite these steps, the BCCI remains unable or unwilling to meet its contractual obligations and if anything it has gone backwards on what it is prepared to accept from the ICC."

Player contracts, which apply to all ICC events until 2007, were drawn up in conjunction with the Council's marketing partner, Global Cricket Corporation.

The contracts were drafted in order to protect the interests of the official tournament sponsors.

But many leading Indian players make the bulk of their income from personal endorsement deals.

Gray said the ICC had made a number of concessions to the Indian Board over the issue, but they now needed a resolution of the matter.

He added: "In light of the stance taken by the Indian Board, the ICC World Cup Contracts Committee had no option but to advise the BCCI there were no further concessions possible and that on the basis of what is on offer the BCCI has clear and compelling contractual agreements the ICC is now looking for it to fulfill."

All 14 teams must supply a final 15-man squad by the end of the year, and a signed contract for each player be returned to the ICC by 14 January.

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia Test captain Steve Waugh's chances of playing in next year's World Cup were left hanging by a thread Wednesday after the International Cricket Council (ICC) clarified the selection rules for its showpiece tournament.

Waugh, who has branded the rules "crazy", was not named in Australia's preliminary 30-man squad announced earlier this month.

An ICC spokesman told this news agency that meant, barring two exceptions, Waugh was ineligible for inclusion in the final 15-man World Cup squad which Australia, along with all other competing nations must lodge with the governing body by December 31.

The spokesman said the exceptions were "injury or special circumstances such as family bereavement".

Earlier Wednesday Waugh said he was prepared to start bowing off-spin if that meant he could be included as a replacement for Shane Warne in the event that the leg-spinner was deemed unfit for World Cup duty.

"I'm batting pretty well and I think there will be some opportunities," Waugh said.

"If I am playing well and there's a spot there I'll be happy to take it. I could bowl off-spin if they want me to. Whatever's going I'm available."

Warne dislocated his shoulder during Sunday's triangular one-day series victory over England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, throwing his World Cup participation into serious doubt.

However whether Australia would be allowed to replace Warne with former one-day skipper Waugh a useful limited overs medium-pace bowler who unlike his twin brother Mark has no track record as a spinner in top-flight cricket, is uncertain.

Under World Cup regulations teams will be only be allowed to replace a player named in their 15-man squad after December 31 with the approval of the tournament's event technical committee.

The committee, which comprises tournament director Ali Bacher, the former South Africa captain, and senior ICC representatives will appoint a panel of three doctors to examine the injured player concerned.

And the regulations also state: "If they (the doctors) agree that the player is unfit to play a useful part in any match during the remainder of

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What's Aussie media upto?

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Star Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan was still being treated unfairly by the Australian media, team manager Ajit Jayasekara claimed here Thursday.

"We are concerned because we feel it is a bit unfair," he said, referring to repeated references in newspapers and on radio to the 30-year-old's action, despite his having been cleared of any illegality by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"We have spoken about it, and the chairman of the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) has made representations about it to the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) and I believe we were supported by the ACB."

Muralitharan -- a key part of Sri Lanka's World Cup winning team in 1996 -- was at the centre of a storm over his controversial action on each of his past two visits to Australia.

He was no-balled for throwing by Western Australian umpire Ross Emerson during an international one-day match on his last visit to Australia in the 1998-99 season.

He was no-balled for the same reason by umpire Darrell Hair during the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in December, 1995, and by umpires Tony McQuillan and Emerson during a one-day clash against the West Indies in Brisbane in January, 1996.

Since the Sri Lankan side arrived in Australia just over a week ago for a new one-day series, the media have repeatedly asked questions about the little spinner, currently sidelined after surgery for a hernia.

He is expected to return to the bowling crease early in the New Year and to be fit to resume his place in the side in mid-January.

The latest defence of Muralitharan comes a day after Sri

Lanka's national cricket governing body dismissed Australian media criticism of one of the country's national heroes.

Hemaka Amarasuriya, chairman of the BCCSL, slammed the media for highlighting the views of former Australian umpires on Muralitharan's bowling action.

"It defies belief that the opinions of these gentlemen, which have been accepted as being in error, continue to make headlines in the context of articles which seem to suggest there is some credibility to their quite erroneous views," Amarasuriya said.

An official protest from the Sri Lankans led to Hair being removed from officiating in any of Sri Lanka's World Cup games in England in 1999.

As Sri Lanka prepared here Thursday for Friday's one-day clash against England at the WACA Ground, skipper Sanath Jayasuriya spoke of the importance of Muralitharan to a team which have been beaten heavily in their first two matches here.

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A professional in every sense

As a player Roger Harper was known more for being an outstanding fielder in any position. After retiring from international cricket in 1995-96, the tall former Guyana, Northamptonshire and West Indies all-rounder felt the same passion for the game. So, Harper needed to contribute something to the senior West Indies team. And that opportunity came in the year 2000 when the 39-year-old off-break bowler was named coach ahead of a number of distinguished candidates among them included Vivian Richards, the present WICB chairman of selectors.

Harper's efforts to raise the spectre of West Indies cricket received a big boost with first a draw in the final Test in Kolkata and then the unlikely 4-3 ODI series victory against India.

The gentle Harper talked at length with LENIN GANI OF THE DAILY STAR SPORT in the lobby of the Hotel Sonargaon about a wide range of subjects a few days after winning the first Test against Bangladesh.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How long have you been coaching the West Indies? Is this your first time in the job?

Roger Harper (RH): I took up the assignment as coach of the West Indies in March, 2000. Prior to that I had coached the West Indies A team for over a period of three years. My first stint as coach of the A team was in 1997 when we toured South Africa.

DSS: Is this your first visit to Bangladesh?

RH: No. I actually came to Bangladesh as coach of the A team in 1998-99 and then we went on tour to India. So it's my second visit here.

DSS: How would you rate coach-player relationship?

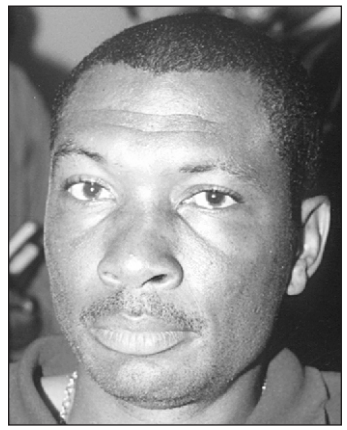
RH: I think since taking up the post my relationship with players was gotten better and better. I think they now understand a lot more about me and me about them and where exactly I'm coming from and what exactly I require of them. So, I think quite a healthy relationship has developed over the years.

DSS: Could you explain how your coaching methods differ from other international coaches?

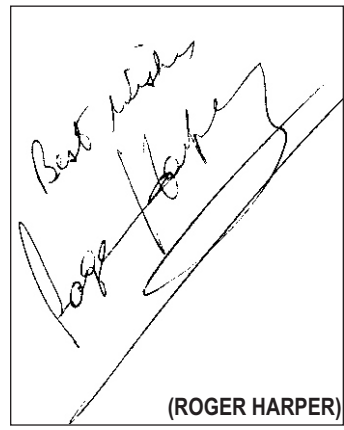
RH: Well, I haven't really examined the methods of the other

coaches. But, I think, West Indian personalities and culture is a little different as you can well imagine. In Bangladesh you have a similar situation where the culture is unique.

It is not just about focusing on the technical aspects of things. I



RH: Having spent a long time in the game as a professional and because of my love for it and desire off the field...and as that game progressed and West Indies cricket returned to heights of yore, I wanted to be able to make a contribution in



(ROGER HARPER)

think it's trying to get the players to manage what I have concentrated on more by trying to improve their skills and abilities as best they can. That has been my focus.

DSS: Did you always want to become a coach after retiring? Do you enjoy the work?

that sphere. So, coaching was a natural progression for me.

DSS: Being the coach of one of the cricket's most colourful teams must be difficult job. How successful do you think West Indies have been under your stint?

RH: Any international coach is

under a tremendous amount of pressure because the weight of expectation is often so great. Looking at the West Indies team today and looking where we came from in the year 2000, I think we have made a bit of progress.

We just came from a tour of India where we lost the Test series 2-0 but we drew one as well and then we won the one-day series which many teams have not been able to do in Asia. And certainly in the recent times West Indies teams have not done abroad.

So, I think the young fellows, most of the players are in their early to mid-20s, are really coming of age and beginning to understand what is required of them at the international level. Also they have to understand what to do to be consistent if they are to be successful in the international scene.

DSS: What areas do you feel the team still needs improving?

RH: I think we just have to be able to adapt quicker. We have to understand and assess conditions earlier and be able to make the transition.

DSS: The last time the West Indies played in South Africa

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MUTTIATH MURALITHARAN

In a letter published in the state run Daily News, Amarasuriya said the legendary Australian batsman Sir Donald Bradman had commended Muralitharan as the most disciplined spinner since World War II.

Last week, Bradman and Muralitharan were named Wisden's best batsman and bowler, respectively, in a top-10 listing of all time best players.

"Wisden had chosen Muralitharan as its top bowler and in doing so undeniably would have thoroughly examined all aspects of the game and his meritorious work," Amarasuriya said.

Umpire Ros Emerson in 1999

Teams back in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh and West Indies cricket teams returned to the capital from Chittagong yesterday.

The home side returned to Dhaka by Biman in the morning while the visitors, who won the two-match Test series 2-0, returned by a GMG flight in the evening.

The Ridley Jacobs-led West Indies will be in the capital tomorrow before they fly home via London ending a four-month tour of the subcontinent, which began with the ICC Champions Trophy in Sri Lanka last September.

On the other hand, Khaled Mashud's men will enjoy a short break before they will attend a World Cup camp starting from December 24.