

Tsunami match Asian XI to be selected in Dhaka today

SPORTS REPORTER

Chief cricket selectors of the Sub-Continent will meet in Dhaka today to select the Asian XI squad that will play against an International Cricket Council (ICC) XI in a charity cricket match for victims of last Sunday's devastating tsunami.

The one-day game will take place in Melbourne, Australia.

The ICC has arranged the fixture as part of the global cricket community's efforts to assist the tsunami-affected countries of South-East and South Asia.

Chief selector of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Faruque Ahmed informed reporters yesterday that he would sit with Kiron More of India, Wasim Bari of Pakistan and Asanta de Mel of Sri Lanka to pick the team.

Faruque hinted that there was a good chance that a couple of Bangladeshi players might get the nod to represent the Asian team despite the Tigers' Test series against Zimbabwe coinciding with the charity game's timing.

"Definitely I will try to push one or two players in the 12 or 13 that will be selected," said Faruque.

The first match will be played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on January 10. A return game at an Asian venue was also very much on the cards. The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) was likely to fix a date for that encounter which could be any time in February or March.



NOW MISSION ZIMBABWE: Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Ashraf (R) does zigzag practice alongside national team's fitness trainer Stuart Kerpinen at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Tigers go the slow way Selectors name first Test squad

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh selectors are banking on a left-arm spin attack to topple Zimbabwe and called up Enamul Haque (1) in a 13-member squad for the first Test against visiting Zimbabwe yesterday.

Enamul's inclusion meant that there were three specialist slow bowlers for the Test that starts at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong from January 6. Veteran Mohammad Rafique and Manjarul Islam Rana complete the trio.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that the decision to bring in 19-year-old Enamul after he had been left out of the series against India, was prompted by the possibility of getting a turning wicket for the opening Test of the two-match series.

"We are expecting a spin-friendly wicket and that's why we have included three spinners in the side. Enamul is the country's second best spinner after Mohammad Rafique in the longer-version," said Faruque at a press conference yesterday afternoon.

Replying to a question, Faruque said that they had instructed the curators to prepare a slow-paced wicket for the first Test but he was not confident about the eventual character of the track.

"Actually we are not technically sound enough to make pitches according to the wish of the team," he said.

The former Bangladesh captain also informed that they have gone

against the idea of picking an all-rounder and have instead, focused on getting a pace combination that is genuinely nippy. So out goes Mushfiqur Rahman and young paceman Nazmul Hossain from the 14-member team for the second Test against India last month.

The selectors kept faith with Talha Jubair despite the lanky quick not being an automatic choice for his club Victoria even. He also struggled to make an impression in the only Test he played against India.

"Talha might not have been successful against India but we still believe that he could be a real strike bowler in Tests. Besides, people should take into consideration the quality of opposition he countered and conditions he had to bowl in before passing judgement on Talha," said Faruque.

Faruque also felt that Talha was close to full fitness after battling injury for over two years and had the pace to compliment Mashrafe bin-Mortuza and Tapash Baisya.

The chief selector also hinted that Mohammed Ashraf's leg-spin could be employed against the Zimbabweans.

Regarding batting, Faruque said

that they were heartened by the performance of fringe players like opener Shahriar Nafees Ahmed and Tushar Imran but avoided the temptation to experiment.

"Everybody knows how important this series is for us because the strength of the two sides are almost the same. There is high expectation and pressure on Bangladesh. So our emphasis has been on experience."

Faruque justified retaining Rajin Saleh who has had a horrendous time with the bat in recent times but showed signs of returning to form with an innings high 82 in the third and final ODI against India.

"He appears to have found his touch back. Besides, we hardly have any better option," said Faruque.

Faruque admitted that the side would have had proper balance if there was a genuine off-spinner and the name of former Bangladesh captain Naimur Rahman invariably popped up at the media conference. But Faruque said that there was virtually no possibility of the 29-year-old coming back in the Test matches after a gap of three years.

"We believe we have picked the best available side. We did not consider Naimur for the Test series and it is too early to talk about his chances in the one-day side."

Faruque informed that Alok Kapali was in line for a recall but a wrist injury ruled him out. "We will assess his condition before the second Test," said Faruque.

The Bangladesh team leaves for Chittagong today.

SQUAD

Habibul Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud (vice-captain), Javed Omar, Nafees Iqbal, Mohammad Ashraf, Aftab Ahmed, Manjarul Islam Rana, Mohammad Rafique, Tapash Baisya, Mashrafe Mortuza, Talha Jubair, Rajin Saleh and Enamul Haque (Jr).



Did U Know?

Mashrafe Bin Mortuza (39 off 20 balls) posted his best score in the third ODI, surpassing his 31 not out off 39 balls against India at Dhaka on December 26, 2004.



Andy Roddick

(American tennis star)

"I threw the kitchen sink at him but he went to the bathroom and came back with his tub." After losing to Roger Federer in the Wimbledon final last year.

Victoria march on, Abahani crash

SPORTS REPORTER



Victoria Sporting Club continued their impressive run in the Green Delta Premier League but there were contrasting fortunes for arch-rivals Abahani and Mohammedan in yesterday's matches.

Victoria stayed atop the table with their seventh win in a row when the defending champions beat Uttara Sporting Club by six wickets. However, Abahani's slim title hopes were dented after they crashed to a 22-run defeat to Brothers Union.

Mohammedan, still struggling in mid-table, returned to winning

ways when they handed Young Pegasus a 54-run defeat.

Victoria moved to 14 points while Abahani were stuck on their previous collection of 10, still two points more than Mohammedan and Brothers after eight rounds.

ABAHANI-BROTHERS

Abahani missed their in-form captain Naimur Rahman in the day's most-talked-about match as they were all out for 197 while chasing Brothers' 219 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Naimur, the leading performer for the popular Dhamondi outfit with both bat and ball, opted out of the game due to a knee injury and even Kumar Dharmasena's quickfire half-century was not enough to inspire Abahani who lost their last five wickets in the space of 39 runs.

Sri Lankan international Dharmasena made 54 off 62 balls with six fours and a six, stand-in captain Neeymur Rashid (24 off 36 balls) and Shamimul Haque (29 off 34 balls) kept the side's hopes alive but two run outs in the 45th and 46th over put Brothers back on top.

Earlier, Javed Omar's second successive half-century in the league and skipper Halim Shah's patient 55 (94 balls) enabled the Gopibagh side put on a decent total after electing to bat.

Man-of-the-match Javed, who struck three fours, topped scored 60 from 75 balls before being run out.

VICTORIA-UTTARA

A captain's knock of 72 not out by Khaled Mashud throttled Victoria to

SCORES IN BRIEF

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
BROTHERS: 219 all out in 50 overs (Litu 20, Halim Shah 55, Javed 60, Manjarul 2-47, Dharmasena 2-49, Imran 2-21).

ABAHANI: 197 all out in 48.5 overs (Imran 36, Dharmasena 54, Neeymur 24, Shamimul 29 n.o.; Kamrul 3-32 Aftab 2-29).
Result: Brothers won by 22 runs.

Venue: Dhamondi Cricket Stadium
UTTARA: 200 for 6 in 50 overs (Rahman 60, Anisur 37, Asadullah 48, Shahjada 3-42, Talha 1-50, Razzak 1-27).

VICTORIA: 204 for 4 in 44.5 overs (Nuruzzaman 15, Fahad 30, Mashud 72 n.o., Salim 22 n.o.; Al Amin 2-33).
Result: Victoria won by six wickets.

Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
MOHAMMEDAN: 229 for 9 in 48 overs (Parvez 48, Bashar 59, Tikolo 47, Forhad 4-39, Riaz 4-42).

PEGASUS: 175 for 9 in 48 overs (Imrose 38, Sharif 35, Riaz 26, Dola 20, Dollar 2-37, Rafique 2-25, Sunny 2-27).
Result: Mohammedan won by 54 runs.

Familiar Pak collapse

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Pakistan squandered a Salman Butt century with another middle-order batting collapse as Stuart MacGill captured five wickets to put Australia in charge after the opening day of the third and final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.

The Pakistanis imploded after Salman cracked his maiden Test century slumping from 241 for three to 292 for nine when bat light stopped play with eight overs left to bowl.

Recalled leg-spinner MacGill did the damage, relishing his Test return after nine months in limbo to snare 5-87 off 22 overs while leading paceman Glenn McGrath claimed 3-38 as Pakistan once again disintegrated.

"There was a real eagerness to continue on from where I left off last time I bowled and because I've been bowling well (for NSW) I expected it to happen and I was keen to show everybody what I've got ... it didn't work out that way early but I'm happy with what I got," said MacGill, who went for 18 off his opening two overs.

"Fortunately, at my age I knew I had to make technical adjustments and get back to a bowling rhythm and it worked out," added MacGill who now has 157 wickets in his 33rd Test match.

Salman kissed the ground as he



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan opener Salman Butt pulls one over mid-wicket on way to scoring a magnificent century on the opening day of the third and final Test against Australia at Sydney yesterday.

Usha blank Mariner

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistani forward Nayeem Ahmed slammed a hattrick and his compatriot Mohammed Nadim scored a spectacular goal as Usha Kirra Chakra thrashed Mariner Youngs Club 4-0 at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday to strengthen their lead in the Green Delta Premier Hockey League.

Usha increased their tally to 30 points after ten wins from 11 games while Mariner, out of the title race following their third defeat, remained on 18 points.

The old-Dhaka outfit, however, will have to take on title contenders Abahani and Mohammedan in their remaining matches without their three Pakistani recruits who leave Dhaka today to fulfil domestic commitments.

Mariner, who fought hard before losing their first-leg match to Usha 3-1, failed to repeat the same flare in a one-sided super league tie.

Nayeem put Usha ahead in the 12th minute with a firm push after captain Moududur Rahman Shuva mis-hit a chance.

Nayeem doubled the score ten minutes later when he dodged past two Mariner defenders to find the mark and the treble was completed in the 51st minute when the player drilled in an angular hit after Tayab Reza and Shuva did the spadework.

Nadim sealed the victory one minute from time. After the centre-half collected the ball in his own half the Usha ace went a magical run that took him past five players including goalkeeper Jahangir to finish the move.

MOHAMMEDAN MEET ABAHANI TODAY

Meanwhile, holders Abahani will take on Mohammedan in both sides' second super league game today.

The Black and Whites, who lost the last match of the first leg to Abahani 1-0, will be under pressure to beat their arch-rivals as they cannot afford even a draw. On 22 points, a draw will end Mohammedan's title bid while a win will place them beside second-placed Abahani (25 points), helping Usha open up a huge five-point gap with two rounds left.

While Mohammedan have failed to add to their foreign recruits which includes only Indian defender Gurinder Singh, Abahani, on the other hand, roped in Malaysian national team captain Kuhan Shan-muganathan ahead of the big clash.

The 28-year-old midfielder, who arrived in the capital yesterday to play for the Sky Blues, has played 274 international matches. He will join Indian forward Prakash Calke and defender Christopher Edward.

SA 247-4

REUTERS, Cape Town

South Africa, who won the toss and chose to bat, were 247 for four at stumps on the first day of the third Test against England in Cape Town on Sunday.

Scores: South Africa 247-4 (Kallis 80 not out, Smith 74)

Zim practice batting well

Cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The three-day match between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI and Zimbabwe was heading for a draw after the tourists took a 68-run lead on the second day at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Replying to the Board XI's 316-7 declared on Saturday, Zimbabwe, who began the day 41 without loss, lost only three wickets as centuries by Stuart Matsikenyeri (150) and Vishimuzi Sibanda (122) helped the side to 384.

Hamilton Masakadza and Brendan Taylor were batting 26 and 11 respectively at the close of play.

Paceman Tareq Aziz Khan made the initial breakthrough for the hosts when he removed Barney Rogers (44 off 59 balls) after putting on 80 runs with Matsikenyeri.

From then on the Board XI attack went on a leather hunt as the two right-handed centuries Sibanda and Matsikenyeri featured in a massive 241-run partnership for the second wicket.

The mammoth stand finally ended when Matsikenyeri decided to retire having spent 331 minutes at the crease. During his 231-ball knock he slammed 17 boundaries and two sixes.

His partner fell 39 runs later to a brilliant catch by Shamsur Rahman off the country's fastest bowler Shahadat Hossain.

Sibanda's 122 came from 220 balls that included 16 fours and one over-boundary.

Zimbabwe captain Tatendu

Taibu will be hoping that his frontline batsmen use the lone practice match to hit form before the first Test against Bangladesh at the MA Aziz Stadium in the port city on Thursday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the second day of the three-day practice match between BCB XI and Zimbabwe at t h e

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PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Zimbabwe centurions Stuart Matsikenyeri (L) and Vishimuzi Sibanda celebrate a boundary off BCB XI paceman Shafaq AJ Jabir (C) on the second day of the three-day tour match at the Divisional Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Star cast World XI

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Cricket's world stars on Sunday signalled their support for victims of the overwhelming Asian tsunami by agreeing to play in the first of two benefit matches in Melbourne next week.

Former Australian captain Steve Waugh will coach and manage a World XI which contains five Australians and four Test captains for the match against an Asian XI at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on January 10.

Champion leg-spinner Shane Warne, who has come out of limited overs retirement to lend his services, joins Australian team-mates Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Glenn McGrath and Ricky Ponting, who will lead the side.

Other top cricketers include Brian Lara and Stephen Fleming, captains of West Indies and New Zealand.

The Asian XI, expected to include players from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, will be named Monday.

A return match will be played in February in either India or Sri

Lanka, the two cricket nations to have endured the worst from the Boxing Day disaster.

International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Malcolm Speed said he expected the match at the 80,000-capacity MCG to raise "millions of dollars" through ground entry, sponsorship, television rights, ground collections and a telenovela.

"Cricket has a focus on the Indian Ocean. Many of our countries have a border on it," Speed said here on Sunday.

"Cricket is the most popular sport in India and Sri Lanka. It's important that worldwide we step

up and show ... that we are capable of providing assistance, and capable of providing aid.

"The response has been unanimous. Everyone right around the cricket world has said 'we must do what we can'.

"Any differences or rivalries that might have existed have disappeared."

The Australians wanted to be involved in the special match through their cricketing bonds with India and Sri Lanka, having toured both countries last year.

Warne made his Test return from a drugs suspension at Galle, an area where thousands of people died and where the cricket ground was ravaged by the tsunami.

The Australians also have a special bond with Madras in southern India -- scene of the tied Test match in 1986 and where the Australians played just over three months ago.

Waugh, who has his own charitable foundation in India, was especially keen to lend his services, and chose the world team with former New Zealand great Richard Hadlee.

"Steve wants to do whatever he can ... it's typical of Steve's approach

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What to WATCH

ESPN

English Premier Football League
Liverpool vs Norwich
Live at 6:40 pm
Aston Villa vs Crystal Palace
Live at 8:55 pm
Sportsline
Live at 11:00 pm

STAR Sports

South Africa vs England
Third Test, Day Two
Live at 2:30 pm
Sportsline
Live at 9:30 pm
Australia vs Pakistan
Third Test, Day Three
Live at 5:25 am (Tuesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Green Delta Premier Hockey (Super League)
Abahani vs Mohammedan (2:45 pm)