

Kalabagan sign off in style

SPORTS REPORTER

Kalabagan Krira Chakra finished their First Division League campaign in style when they defeated Surjo Tarun Club by 59 runs at the Dhanbadu National Stadium on Sunday.

The 18-team fray ended on Sunday with both Kalabagan and Sonargaon Cricketers returning to the Premier Division as champions and runners-up respectively. On the other hand, Wari Club and Nabin Sangha were relegated to the second division league.

Kalabagan, which returned to the top flight of domestic cricket after just one season, finished top of the table securing 28 points from 17 matches while Sonargaon bagged 26 from the same number of outings.

Put into bat, Kalabagan scored 146-7 in a curtailed 20-over game with Raju Parvez scoring highest unbeaten 45 off 35 balls.

In reply, Surjo Tarun were bundled out for 87 in 17.2 overs. Saif Mahmood was the wicket-keeper, capturing four wickets for 27 in his four-over spell.

In another match, Gazi Tank outplayed Rupali Bank by nine wickets at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium to finish on 26 points but they had to be satisfied with third position as Sonargaon enjoyed a superior head-to-head record.

However, the game itself was short affair as Rupali Bank were skittled out for 41 in 13.1 overs. Gazi Tank raced to the target with 45 losing just one wicket in 8.3 overs.

Elsewhere, Azad Sporting Club beat Partex Sporting Club by five wickets at the BKSP ground in Savar and Bangladesh Boys managed an exciting one-wicket victory over Young Pegasus B at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium.

BCB XI open

FROM PAGE 13

Arations for the English tour and our boys are looking forward to getting positive results," said the gifted 20-year-old right-hander after practice. "We have to first win two games and then who knows we could reach the final," he added.

The 14-member Bangladesh selection arrived in the Indian city on Sunday and went straight into practice for their first four-day match against East Zone, who will be captained by Sourav Ganguly.

The BCB XI are the second foreign side to play in the Duleep Trophy after England A had taken part last season.

The visitors however have their task cut out against an East Zone side for whom it is going to be a 'must-win' situation having lost their opening outing against Central Zone last week.

Besides Indian skipper Ganguly, Rohan Gavaskar, the son of legendary batsman Sunil, is set to return to the side after missing the previous fixture.

East Zone coach V Venkataran said the return of Sourav and Rohan would bolster the team's batting strength against their Bangladeshi opponents.

Former Indian Test opener Shiv Sundar Das said he hoped that some consistent performances in the domestic circuit could help him resurrect his international career.

2nd Aus-NZ

FROM PAGE 13

Weeks with bruising to the bone on his left knee, and after soreness at training Monday he was advised to rest.

Wilson will be picking up where he left off after playing four one-day internationals against Australia in 1993 before embarking on a glittering decade-long All Black rugby career.

For Australia, batsman Mike Hussey and paceman Jason Gillespie replace Simon Katich and Michael Kasprowicz on Tuesday.

'India beatable at home'

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer Sunday said India are beatable at home and his young team can take inspiration from Australia and South Africa who won series in India.

"It would be a challenging tour to a country which is regarded as one of the second best teams in the world but in recent years Australia, Pakistan and South Africa have beaten them and that would be an inspiration," Woolmer told AFP as Pakistan prepare for their tour of India.

"A home team always starts as a favourite but this Pakistan team is maturing and is ready for the India challenge."

Australia won their first series in India since 1965 last year while Hansie Cronje led South Africa to a 1-0 win in their series in India in 2000.

Pakistan under former captain Wasim Akram beat India in two of the three Test matches in their last tour of India in 1999.

"They (India) are an all-round team now in 1999 and 2000 and it would be a challenge to confront the

likes of Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh," said Woolmer, who played 19 Tests for England and coached South Africa between 1994-1999.

Woolmer took over as coach in June 2004, replacing Javed Miandad after Pakistan lost the home series against India.

"It would be as challenging as Australia in a different sort of way but we won't be confronted with the same sort of fast bowling attack like Australia but Indian spinners would also be challenging," Woolmer said.

Pakistan announced a 16-member squad on Friday, recalling off-spinner Arshad Khan after express pacer Shoaib Akhtar pulled out due to injury.

Woolmer agreed Akhtar's absence would be felt but hoped other bowlers would come and fill the gap.

"Obviously a bowler of Akhtar's pace is very useful and we can't replace him because we don't have bowlers of his quality and so we will have to play a different type of cricket but in adversity others get a chance to do well."

He disagreed Pakistan's pace attack was depleted with fit-again Mohammad Sami under more pressure.

"I don't think it would put Sami

under pressure, it will give him a chance to become the strike bowler, he is due for some luck and hopefully take wickets when it matters."

Woolmer agreed with former Pakistan great Imran Khan that India were vulnerable on pace.

"Don't think about getting India out on spin, they played Australian Shane Warne with consummate ease and I tend to agree with Imran that they are more vulnerable on pace, people bowling in the right areas."

The Pakistan coach said scoring big in India would be vital.

"We haven't been convincing with the bat in Tests in the sense that we have not played long innings, something we must do in India and obviously India has the edge as they are very dangerous in batting."

"They can score big and in India if you score big the pitches deteriorate as they do there and assist spin so big scores are vital there."

On reports Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar was doubtful for the series due to an elbow injury, Woolmer said: "Tendulkar is a very fine player but if he is not playing other players always step in, his absence would mean it's one less great player to get out."

Wasim finds Shoaib right

Cricket

REUTERS, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram has backed fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar's decision to withdraw from the Test series in India because of injury.

"I think he took the sensible decision. Because no bowler no matter how great is of any use to his team if he is struggling with an injury," Wasim told Reuters on Sunday.

"Shoaib should concentrate on regaining his fitness properly and then make a comeback in the one-day series in India but Pakistan will miss him in the Test matches."

Shoaib pulled out on Friday because of a hamstring problem but the Pakistan selectors will consider the 29-year-old for the one-day series if he is fit.

Wasim, who captained Pakistan to two Test wins in India on their last full tour of the country in 1999, was also

pleased with the inclusion of off-spinner Arshad Khan, recalled to the squad after a five-year absence.

"The selectors have done well to recall Arshad Khan to partner Danish Kaneria. These two have a role to play to keep Pakistan in a Test on all five days," said the former fast bowler who took 414 Test wickets.

Meanwhile AFP adds from Lahore, Shoaib on Sunday denied suggestions that he pulled out of the tour of India due to fear of failure, saying he was genuinely injured and still wants to play in the one-dayers.

"I have not run away from the tour, why would I?"

"I am disappointed to be missing the tour but people saying I have run away is more disheartening. If I get fit and the team needs me I will play the one-day series."

The 29-year-old, dubbed the Rawalpindi Express for his pace, said it would take him at least a month to recover from a hamstring injury.

"I like to run towards the field and

not away from it but what people don't understand is that a fast bowler can't play every game because it's too hard to do that," said Shoaib.

"It (the tour) would have given me a chance to make up for my not so good performance in the series we lost to India," said Shoaib. He took a meager seven wickets in Pakistan's 2-1 Test series loss to their arch-rivals last year.

His pull-out has further weakened a depleted Pakistan bowling attack with two other frontline pacemen - Shabbir Ahmed and Umar Gul - already out due to injuries.

The pace attack of the team, announced on Saturday, will now be led by Shoaib's new ball partner Mohammad Sami. He will be assisted by Navedul Hasan, left-arm Mohammad Khalil and all-rounder Abdul Razzaq.

Pakistan's former greats Imran Khan and Saifraz Nawaz have termed Shoaib's absence a serious blow to Pakistan's chances on the tour.

Bhaji could be the first

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh is expected to become the first bowler in elite cricket to benefit from a relaxation of rules on chucking, an Australian biomechanics expert said Sunday.

The new International Cricket Council (ICC) rule, which comes into effect on March 1, allows bowlers to bend their elbows by up to 15 degrees.

Harbhajan was reported for a suspect bowling action late last year and has been assessed by expert Bruce Elliott of the University of Western Australia, who supervised a high-speed camera test on the cricketer in Perth last Thursday.

Elliott said his report to the ICC and the Board of Control for Cricket in India on Harbhajan would be based on the new ICC rule, which will deem almost all modern bowling actions legal.

This would be of benefit to Harbhajan, who was reported by English match referee Chris Broad during last December's Test series in Bangladesh for his "dosra", a delivery which turns away from the right-handers instead of coming into them like a normal off-break.

"I am assuming the reference to

angles will be under the new (ICC) regulations," Elliott told the Sun Herald newspaper. "That's the way I will write the report."

The 24-year-old spinner, with 189 wickets in 43 Tests, had been given until February 18 to correct his action ahead of India's home Test and one-day series against

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