



Did U Know?

The Major League Baseball teams use about 850,000 balls per season.



Dav Whatmore

(Bangladesh cricket coach)

"If there was one change I'd make it's that you could take to the field with 11, but your 12th man could be a replacement and come on to bat or bowl."

On an active 12th man.



ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8 pm
English Premier League Preview
Taped version at 9 pm
Here We Go
Same day delay at 10.30 pm
New Zealand v Australia
Third ODI
Live at 7 am (Saturday)
STAR Sports
South Africa v Zimbabwe
First ODI
Live at 6.30 pm
Sportsline
Live at 10 pm



Ispahani 6th Nat'l Cricket League
(Four-day, Day-2)
Dhaka vs Khulna
Venue: FCS
Rajshahi vs Sylhet
Venue: RDVS
Barisal vs Chittagong
Venue: CDVS

Rebels set for dramatic comeback?

CRICINFO, undated

CricInfo yesterday has learnt that four of Zimbabwe's rebels -- former captain Heath Streak, Stuart Carlisle, Ray Price and Trevor Gripper -- are on the verge of making a dramatic comeback.

It seems that talks aimed at brokering a deal to bring the remaining striking players back into the fold have progressed well, and the four could well travel to Kwekwe overnight to play in the final A team Test between Zimbabwe and Bangladesh. If they do play, then it is quite likely that one or more of them will be drafted into the squad already in South Africa.

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NAT'L CHESS

Zia faces Mahfuz in first round

SPORTS REPORTER

The Mercantile Bank 31st National Chess Championship begins today with GM Ziaur Rahman starting the defence of his title against qualifier Mahfuzur Rahman.

A total of 14 players including nine qualifiers are taking part in the round-robin league.

Apart from holder Zia, GM Niaz Murshed, last year's runner-up International Master Abdullah Al Rakib, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib

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Shahin lone fighter



SPORTS REPORTER

In-form Barisal batsman Shahin Hossain enhanced his growing reputation with a maiden hundred while the effervescent Rajshahi skipper Khaled Mashud missed a ton by a whisker on a first day otherwise dominated by bowlers in the National Cricket League yesterday.

Defending champions Dhaka dismissed Khulna for a paltry 153 at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium but then ran into trouble when they batted.

DHAKA v KHULNA

Skipper Khaled Mahmud led Dhaka from the front with a three-wicket haul as Khulna's first-innings lasted less than 59 overs after they had been put in.

Playing without captain Habibul Bashar, who opted to nurse an old toe injury, Khulna lost the first two wickets on 17. Former national captain Mahmud took both those wickets and then fellow pacers Mahbubul Alam and Niaz Morshed Nahid struck at regular intervals.

The Khulna innings could have experienced more embarrassment but Dhaka dropped no less than 15 catches. Mahmud took the last wicket with his occasional off-break and finished with 3-17. His new ball partner Mahbubul and left-arm spinner Mehrab Hossain Jr chipped in with 2-36 and 2-27.

Only a few lusty blows from Dollar Mahmud (35 off 42), who made most of three missed

chances, took Khulna past 100 as he shared 47 runs for the ninth wicket with Monirul Islam (10).

Paceman Dollar then joined forces with stand-in captain Manjurul Islam to rattle the Dhaka top order. Both took two wickets as Dhaka closed the day on 66 for four.

Wicketkeeper Sajjad Kadir was batting on 25 with experienced Halim at stumps.

CHITTAGONG v BARISAL

Wicketkeeper Shahin's unbeaten 119 -- the seven century in the competition so far -- saved bottom team Barisal's blushes against Chittagong at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The number five cracked 14 boundaries in a valiant 251-ball knock as the tourists, who were tottering at 50-6 after being put into bat, reached 238 all out.

Gazi Alamgir (2-55) and Wayaskarani Palash (2-42) drew early blood as Barisal slumped to 37-4 when Shahin came to the wicket. Fresh from three half-centuries in the previous two rounds, he repaired the damage during a 114-run stand for the sixth wicket with Mosharraf Hossain (42 from 94 balls).

Shahin in the process became the first player to cross the 300 runs in the ongoing competition. The Barisal middle order was destroyed by part-time seamer Ehsanul Haque who grabbed 3-47.

Chittagong raced to 25 without any damage from two overs in their reply as young opener Tamim Iqbal (21 off 11 balls) smashed five boundaries off left-arm spinner Nadif Chowdhury's only over.

RAJSHAHI v SYLHET

At the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, the hosts seized the initiative when Mashud's 98 throttled them to a commanding 243-5 at close of play from a precarious 19-3.

While opener Naeem Islam held the fort from one end with an unbeaten 75 from 226 deliveries, Mashud provided the fireworks hitting 16 fours.

The Rajshahi captain had to walk to the pitch after Naeem was retired hurt following the loss of three quick wickets.

But Mashud used his experience during a 177-ball knock spanning three hours to steady the innings. He was unfortunate to edge the ball to wicketkeeper Babel off left-arm spinner Nabil Samad just two runs short of the magical three-figures.

Naeem, who returned to bat put on 52 runs for the unbroken sixth wicket with Hasanuzzaman Rosel (24 not out).

Veteran pacer Hasibul Hossain was the pick of Sylhet attack with 3-46.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboards on the first day of the four-day matches of the National Cricket League yesterday:

KHULNA: 1st innings	
Sadat b Niaz	22
Shaful Ibw b Mahmud	15
Rezwan b Mahmud	0
Sazzad c Sunny b Mahbub	10
Jamaluddin run out	17
Asadullah b Mahbub	1
Mashrafe c Anwar b Sunny	17
Salim c Anwar b Mehrab Jr	10
Monirul c Mehrab b Mahmud	11
Dollar b Mehrab Jr	35

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PHOTO: STAR

Khulna's last man Manjurul Islam tries in vain to score a few against Dhaka on Day One of their National Cricket League match at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

Federation Cup from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka domestic football season kicks off today with the Tibet 20th Federation Cup opener between Dipali Juba Sangha and Wari Club at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Tournament committee chairman ZA Khan will inaugurate the season's curtain-raiser competition in a simple ceremony before the Group A match starts at 3 pm.

A total of 18 teams split into three groups vie for the three qualifying berths for the eight-team finals where they join big guns and automatic qualifiers Muktiyoddha, Mohammedan, Abahani, Sheikh Russel and Brothers Union.

Pollock injured for 1st ODI

BBC ONLINE, undated

South Africa all-rounder Shaun Pollock has withdrawn from Friday's opening one-day international against Zimbabwe in Johannesburg with an ankle injury.

Pace bowler Andre Nel is also doubtful because of a hamstring problem.

However, captain Graeme Smith confirmed he would play in the day-night match despite a persistent ankle injury.

"We're struggling to work out exactly what the problem is, but it's pretty much certain that I'll play in all three matches in the series," he said.

The home side are already without Jacques Kallis, after choosing to rest the all-rounder for the entire series.

South Africa (from): G Smith (captain), N Boje, A Bacher, M Boucher (wicketkeeper), AB de Villiers, H Gibbs, A Hall, J Kemp, A Morkel, A Nel, M Ntini, A Prince, J Rudolph.

PCB lets Woolmer off the hook

AFP, Lahore

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has cleared coach Bob Woolmer of criticising umpires in Australia, sparing him a potential fine or ban, officials said.

"Woolmer was asked to give his comments and he told the PCB he was quoted out of context. So the matter looks to be over," PCB spokesman Abbas Zaidi said from Islamabad on Wednesday.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) earlier this month said Woolmer was being reported for comments made about the umpires after the tri-series one-day finals in Australia.

"It went 29-5 against us," Woolmer was quoted as saying by the Brisbane Courier-Mail, in an apparent reference to the umpiring decisions after Pakistan lost both the tri-series finals against Australia.

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TV dispute over

Doordarshan to telecast Indo-Pak series



AFP, New Delhi

An Indian court ordered public broadcaster Doordarshan to telecast the upcoming cricket matches against Pakistan, ending speculation the high-profile tour could be cancelled due to a TV rights row.

Judge KP Sivasubramanian of the Madras High Court ruled in an interim order that Doordarshan be given the rights for the tour and asked the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to organise the production of the telecast.

"I am sure cricket fans will be happy now," a TV channel quoted the judge as saying on Thursday.

He added a final judgement would be made later in the writ petition filed by Zee Telefilms, India's largest listed media com-

pany, after it was denied the TV rights by the BCCI last September.

The BCCI backed out of a four-year, 308-million dollar deal with Zee after it was challenged in court by rival ESPN-STAR Sports, jointly owned by Disney and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

Doordarshan had also telecast the home series against Australia and South Africa earlier in the season on the advice of the Supreme Court.

BCCI president Ranbir Singh Mahendra welcomed the interim order, saying all doubts about the Pakistan tour taking place had been removed.

"We will abide by the court's judgement and finalise the production details soon," said Mahendra.

The judge, however, prohibited the BCCI from hiring either Zee or ESPN-Star Sports for the production.

Both channels had offered to

produce the telecast to end the current impasse after the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Tuesday the series was unlikely to be played if the TV issue was not solved.

Pakistan are due to arrive here on Monday to play three Tests and five one-day internationals on their first full tour of India since 1999.

The tour, shrouded in confusion and controversy, has already been delayed by three days due to a dispute over venues.

The Pakistan Cricket Board had threatened to pull out if India insisted on hosting a test in Ahmedabad, the main city of the western state of Gujarat that witnessed the country's worst Hindu-Muslim riots in a decade in 2002.

India scrapped the Ahmedabad Test while Pakistan agreed to play an additional one-dayer there.

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PHOTO: AFP

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES: Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq is flanked by legends Imran Khan (L) and Wasim Akram during the opening of a sports shop in Lahore on February 23.



PHOTO: AFP

I SAW NOTHING! Frank Rijkaard (L), the Barcelona coach instructs his players while his Chelsea counterpart Jose Mourinho does the same during their Champions League match at the Nou Camp stadium in Barcelona on February 23.