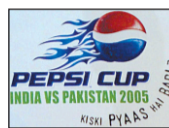


Praying for inspiration

Third Indo-Pak ODI today

AFP, Jamshedpur



Pakistan vice-captain Younis Khan said on Friday his team will bounce back in the current one-day series against India as they had done in the preceding Test series.

"We drew the Test series by winning the final match in Bangalore and we can do the same in the one-dayers too," a fit-again Younis said ahead of the third match at the Keenan Stadium here on Saturday.

Pakistan, who trail 0-2 in the six-match series, must win on Saturday to keep their hopes alive of winning the series.

"It is only a matter of finding the rhythm and we have every chance of winning some matches on the trot," said Younis, who missed the first two one-dayers with a fever.

"One-dayers are all about playing well on a particular day. India had two good days but we can come back and win the next four matches."

Younis set up Pakistan's memorable win in Bangalore with a career-best 267 and 84 net out.

"I am fit to play but we have yet to decide on the composition," he said.

"We have been trying out different things and may change the batting order around a bit."

"Winning the toss proves crucial on flat pitches as the team batting first often puts up a big total and subsequently pressure mounts on the opposition."

"India won the toss in the previous two matches and batsmen like Virender Sehwag survived some early chances. But things can be a lot different with some luck," Younis said.

Indian vice-captain Rahul Dravid

was cautious about predicting the outcome of the one-day series.

"We dominated the Test series but still could not win it," he said. "So we have to strive to do our best on a regular basis."

"Pakistan are a very good side and a couple of good performances from their top players can turn the series around."

India's wicketkeeper Mahender Dhoni, who hit a belligerent 148 in the second match at Visakhapatnam on Tuesday, ensured tickets for Saturday's match on his home ground were sold out within hours.

"He did so well in the last game that we are likely to persist with him at the top of the order," Dravid said of India's newest star.

"He is definitely an asset and it also means I will not have to keep wickets any more."

Dravid was forced to keep wicket in one-day matches over the last few years, including the World Cup in 2003.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2



I'M BACK! Younis Khan, the in-form Pakistan batsman, gestures during a training session in Jamshedpur yesterday. Pakistan and India meet in the third ODI of their 6-match series here today.

PHOTO: INTERNET SOURCE

Dhaka on title course



SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Dhaka opened up an almost decisive ten-point lead at the top of the National Cricket League when they inflicted an innings and 83-run defeat on Barisal in their eighth round match yesterday.

The two other games ended in draws as expected but Chittagong snatched a first-innings lead on the fourth and final day to frustrate hosts Sylhet. Rajshahi, meanwhile, also collected four points against Khulna by virtue of their first innings lead.

With their fourth outright win, Dhaka stretched their collection to 38 points. With two more rounds to go, Rajshahi remained a distant second with 28 points, followed by Chittagong (24), Khulna (18),

Rajshahi (18) and Barisal (16). The leaders will now just have to avoid defeats in the last two matches to retain the first-class title.

BARISAL-DHAKA

Mehrab Hossain Jr and Fahim Muntasir spun Dhaka to an expected rout at the Barisal Stadium.

Resuming on 91 without loss in their second innings after following on, the home team were all out for 308 in their second innings.

Three half-centuries after a solid 100-plus opening stand between the overnight pair Imran Ahmed (49) and Bikash Sharma (43) raised Barisal's hopes of a draw. However, a terrible collapse saw their resistance end after 75 overs on the final day.

Left-arm spinner Mehrab ended the match with ten wickets after taking 6-80 from 31.1 overs while off-spinner Muntasir captured 3-56

in the second innings to finish with 7-94 overall.

Muntasir, who scored a century in the Dhaka innings, was the unanimous choice for the man-of-the-match award.

For Barisal, Nasiruddin Faruk, Shahin Hossain and Towhid Hossain made fifties but the visitors captured the last six wickets for 60 runs to wrap up victory halfway through the final session.

RAJSHAHI-KHULNA

Resuming on 161-5 with a 242-run lead, Rajshahi were eventually all out for 245. Captain Hasanuzzaman Rosel (75) but his decision to not declare earlier probably minimised their prospects of forcing a result.

Facing an improbable 327 for victory, Khulna played out the after Rajshahi had reducing them to 51-4. Asadullah Khan's 74 however, had

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

Dav pays no heed to speculation



SPORTS REPORTER

Coach Dav Whatmore looked relaxed yesterday during the training session with the Tigers at the Army Stadium although an international media report about his contract created confusion among the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials and local media.

It seemed that the 50-year-old Australian's renewal of contract with the BCB was a mere formality but everything suddenly became uncertain following a BBC report linking him to becoming India's next coach.

But Whatmore was not ready to take the report seriously as he said that even he could not recollect the exact conversa-

tion. "I can't remember when it happened. I think it was a long time ago when I said something like that. I don't understand how this came now," said the Bangladesh coach when he was asked about the report.

"It's not proper to talk about these things. Anything about deals or negotiations should come from the employers," he added.

The Sri Lankan-born Australian also talked with two senior cricketers in the squad, captain Habibur Bashar and his predecessor Khaled Mahmud, about the matter during a break.

"The presence of a coach like Dav is always inspiring for any team but we are professionals and that's why we want to concentrate only on our cricket. There is a authority to look after the matter," said

Bashar. Meanwhile, Board officials met Whatmore, whose contract expires on April 30, on Friday evening to finalise the issue and it might take another day to complete the procedures, said BCB advisor Reszuddin Al Mamun last night after their meeting.

"We have discussed renewing Whatmore's contract today and it might take another session to complete the deal. Naturally, after ending his first tenure, he will get increments. There are also other things to settle," Mamun said.

"As far as we know, Dav has yet to receive any offer from the Indian board. So we are not worried about the report. But if he receives an enormous offer from any other nation, we won't be able to afford him," he admitted.

What to WATCH

- BTV & DD Sports**
India vs Pakistan
Third ODI
Live at 9:30 am
- ESPN**
English Premier Football League
Chelsea vs Birmingham City
Live at 7:55 pm
- Norwich City vs Man United
Live at 10:10 pm
- Primera Liga**
Bilbao vs Real Sociedad
Live at 1:55 am (Sunday)
- STAR Sports**
English Premier Football League
Arsenal vs Middlesbrough
Live at 7:55 pm
- TEN Sports**
West Indies vs South Africa
Second Test, Day Two
Live at 8:00 pm

Fleming denies SL Tame draw in Napier



AFP, Napier

A courageous knock by injured skipper Stephen Fleming countered the feisty bowling of the unorthodox Lasith Malinga to steer New Zealand to safety and a drawn first cricket Test against Sri Lanka here Friday.

Malinga ended with a well-deserved five wicket bag, but not before Fleming had returned to the crease with an injured hand to carry New Zealand from their precarious lunch total of 148 for seven to be all out at tea for 238.

His valuable 41 helped set the Sri Lankans the improbable target of 302 to win off 29 overs, and their innings lasted just nine balls and seven runs before the match was abandoned

because of bad light.

All the New Zealand batsmen struggled with the slinging action of the speedster who won the man-of-the-match award with his first career bag of five wickets, five for 80, to give him nine for the match.

His performance was all the more remarkable as the McLean Park wicket had proved very much a bowler's graveyard for the first four days where the combined first innings totalled more than 1,000 runs.

But while a draw appeared inevitable when New Zealand started their second innings late on the fourth day, Malinga had other ideas, carving through the cream of New Zealand batting.

By lunch on the final day New Zealand were seven wickets down, Fleming had retired hurt and they

held an overall lead of just 211.

But the New Zealand captain returned after the break, joining Lou Vincent to put the brakes on the batting collapse.

Vincent, who survived a disputed catch by Tillakaratne Dilshan off Malinga on 37, posted his eighth Test half-century before he was bowled by Upul Chandana for 52.

As luck turned New Zealand's way, new batsman Kyle Mills was given not out on nought by Steve Bucknor despite getting a big edge at Malinga.

Mills and Fleming added a valuable 41 for the ninth wicket, with Mills scoring 22 before he was caught by Jayasuriya off spinner Rangana Herath.

Fleming batted 155 minutes and faced 122 balls for his captain's

SEE PAGE 13 COL 8

Fominyh alone atop

SPORTS REPORTER

Russian Grand Master Alexander Fominyh took solo lead in the seventh United Insurance and United Leasing Grand Master's Chess Tournament after the fifth round games at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Fominyh secured 4.5 points after beating Indian International Master Prathamesh Sunil Mokal in the fourth round and sharing point with Indian GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly in the fifth round.

GMs Ziaur Rahman, Ganguly and Iulduchev Saidali of Uzbekistan, IMs Reefat Bin Sattar and Enamul Hossain Rajib were in the second position with 4 points each.

IM Abdullah Al-Rakib, GM Safin Shukharat, Anwar Shazuli and IM Satyapragyan grabbed the third slot securing 3.5 points each.

In the day's fourth round, Zia beat Satyapragyan, Ganguly beat Rakib, Saidali beat Rezaul, Reefat beat Akshayraj and Vijayalakshmi beat Gunasekaran. GM Niaz Mursheed lost his board to Anwar Sahzuli.

In the fifth round games, Zia drew with Saidali, Reefat beat Vijaalakshmi, Rajib beat Prathamesh, Rakib beat Saptarshi.

STANCHART CRICKET Asif toys with Happy Times

SPORTS REPORTER

A back-to-back century by Asif Ahmed guided Maple Leaf International to score another massive victory when they thumped Happy Times International by 234 runs in the Standard Chartered Under-13 Young Tigers School Cricket Championship yesterday.

Fresh from his 123 in the previous match, the Maple Leaf opener slammed a 96-ball 168 with the help of 29 fours and a six. His opening partner Mehedi Hasan hit 98 as Maple Leaf piled up 414 all out in the stipulated 50 overs at the Dhanmondi Club ground.

Happy Times were bundled out for 180 in 33 overs.

At the Uttara Friends Club ground, Swapan Mulla cracked 106 to help Enam Children's (362-6) post a massive 260-run victory over Dhanmondi Tutorial (102-10).

In the day's other matches, BCIR High (253-10) outplayed Adhunik Biddyalaya (63-10) by 190 runs, Blue Bird (146-8) managed a two-wicket victory against Bangladesh International (142-10), Natun Pallan (86-4) handed a six-wicket defeat to Scholastica (83-10), Manarat (151-4) defeated Nabakumar (149-10) by six wickets and Shahid Ramiz Uddin (224-10) beat Badda Alatunnessa (149-10) by 75 runs.



Russian GM Alexander Fominyh (L) and Indian IM Prathamesh Sunil Mokal are engaged in cerebral warfare during their fourth round board of the seventh United Insurance Grand Master's Chess Tournament yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

TALK TURKEY



Mahendra Dhoni
(Indian wicketkeeper)
"It was a good opportunity for me to bat up the order and I'm glad I grabbed the chance. The knock will give me a big confidence boost for the future."
After scoring 148 in the second ODI against Pakistan.

No black trousers please!



AFP, Napier

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming has asked umpires to remove their black trousers so batsmen can better sight the ball from Sri Lanka's feisty slinger Lasith Malinga when the second cricket Test starts in Wellington on Monday.

The 21-year-old terrorised the New Zealanders in the first Test, which ended in a draw here Friday, taking a career-best five for 80 in New Zealand's second innings and a match haul of nine for 210.

Fleming said Malinga's side-winder action, where the ball is delivered from in front of the umpire, made the ball sometimes impossible to pick up with the backdrop of black trousers.

"We can't see him. When it's a bit overcast and late in the evening, you

SEE PAGE 13 COL 6



STANDING TALL: New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming defends off the back foot on the last day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at Napier yesterday.

PHOTO: AP