



Did U Know?

West Indies have lost all five matches in a home series for the first time. Overall, this is their second series defeat by 5-0 margin. New Zealand had defeated West Indies by 5-0 in New Zealand between January 2 and 11, 2000.



Ashok Malhotra

(Former Indian Test batsman)
"Everybody says John Wright as a coach did a good job, but what exactly did he do? He could not rectify Sourav Ganguly's short-pitched delivery problem for five years."



ESPN
Football Crazy
Live at 5:00 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm

BCCI interviews new coaches from today

PTI, New Delhi

Australia's two-time World Cup winner Tom Moody walks in as the hot favourite for the Indian cricket team's coaching post ahead of the two-day interview with a six-member committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) beginning here today.

Moody, who was part of Australian squads that lifted the World Cup in 1987 and 1999, will bank on the Indian players' support to pip his compatriot and former Aussie captain Greg Chappell.

Chappell, one of the best batsmen of the 20th century and a master technician, has the backing of skipper Sourav Ganguly but have to contend with overwhelming support of other senior members of the Indian team to Moody.

Mohinder Amarnath, the lone Indian in the fray for the job left vacant by New Zealander John Wright's departure at the end of the season, and West Indian Desmond Haynes are the other contenders.

The candidates were expected to arrive last night in the capital and Haynes' problems in arranging his visa has meant that the programme, which was originally scheduled for Thursday, might spill over to Friday.

"We are sorting out the issue," BCCI secretary SK Nair said on Haynes' visa.

WOMEN'S HANDBALL Mariners take on Viqarunnissa in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Mariner Youngs Club will take on Viqarunnissa in the opening match of the Tibet Women's Handball League this morning at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex.

The 9-team event, however, will be officially inaugurated by Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed in the afternoon at the Dhaka Stadium handball court. Two matches will be played in the day's second session.

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PREMIER LEAGUE

Team watch: Muktijoddha



SPORTS REPORTER

Always good starters, Muktijoddha Sangsad however often stumble as they near the finish line.

This has happened on too many occasions for comfort after their sensational first league triumph in 1994 which introduced them as a powerhouse in local football. But despite being in the limelight for a decade, the Reds have only won two league titles (1997 and 2003) in-between.

Last year, they clinched the Federation Cup to start the season on a high note but then gradually drifted away. A similar hot and cold beginning this year has once again cast doubts about Muktijoddha's Premier Football League prospects.

Champions in the Independence Day Gold Cup and runners-up in the Federation Cup, the Reds have lost all three of their home matches in the ongoing AFC Cup.

Coach Shafiqul Islam Manik however, played down the concern.

"Our performance leading up to the Premier League has been consistent but luck was not always with us," said Manik while talking to Daily Star Sport on Wednesday.

"When our strikers have scored,

we have got the results. Our striking duo of Moni and Kanchan managed just three goals together in the last league and that was one of the main reasons why we fared poorly," said Manik whose boys finished fourth.

"But we reached the National League final as Moni was in fantas-



AMINUL ISLAM

tic form, scoring seven goals. Our luck ran out eventually and we lost the final on penalties.

"This year Kanchan has lost form after a good start but we have to keep faith with the national players. Our failure to convert chances has cost us in the Federation Cup as

well as in the AFC Cup home ties," he explained.

National striker Moni, who underwent a knee surgery in India on Tuesday, is not expected to play any part in the league and Muktijoddha will have to rely on Nigerian forward Paul Nwakwhucu's scoring ability and hope that Kanchan returns to form.

"It is also difficult for a player to keep his form over two months. If the league finishes on schedule, the team would peak at the right time and would surely be a contender to win the championship."

The former national footballer was also worried about some other things.

"Already, the federation (BFF) has changed the bylaws regarding the quota of foreign players under pressure from different teams. We expect the authorities to be neutral. The referees should also have the freedom to conduct a match fairly and without pressure. We just don't want to become victims of these factors. The best referee was not appointed for the Federation Cup final and decisions went against us. I am also concerned about crowd behaviour. During that final, our supporters were driven out by fans of two big clubs," said Manik.

Manik thought that apart from
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Active 12th man in ODIs?



REUTERS, Dubai

Teams could withdraw batsmen for slow scoring during one-day international under radical recommendations from an ICC committee on Tuesday.

The proposal for tactical substitutions was put forward at a two-day meeting of the International Cricket Council's (ICC) cricket committee as part of a package of ideas aimed at increasing the attraction of the limited overs game.

"The biggest change that we are recommending is the 12-man team," Sunil Gavaskar, chairman of the committee, told reporters.

"Though the on-field strength of players must not exceed 11, a captain can substitute a player who he feels is not performing well."

"It could be anybody -- a

wicketkeeper, batsman, fielder or a bowler. The substitution in line with soccer or rugby, will add more thrill to the game and, at the same time, will give a captain more tactics to play with.

"For instance, if a player is batting too slowly, he can replace him. But the new batsman will start afresh and the batsman who has been replaced will be considered retired on his individual score.

"Similarly, if a bowler is replaced, say for instance, after five overs, the new bowler will bowl the sixth over. Each of bowler will have his own bowling figures. The 12-man team can be effective both in terms of tactics and injury to a player."

The committee, whose recommendations will be considered by the ICC's chief executive's committee meeting in London at the end of June, also proposed a change to field restrictions.

"We have decided to have 20-

over field restrictions instead of 15 currently being used," Gavaskar added.

"The first 10 overs are mandatory at the start of the innings while the fielding captain will have the option of using the rest 10 -- five in each lot -- whenever he wants to."

"The idea is to try and get away from the predictability of the game, have more excitement and give more tactical advantage to the fielding captain," he said.

The committee also recommended that on-field umpires could consult the TV umpire whenever there was doubt -- be it over lbw or bat-pad catching -- rather than just in live decisions.

"All these recommendations will be used on trial basis during the Johnny Walker Super Series in Australia," Gavaskar said.



PHOTO: AP

Pakistan opener Shahid Afridi follows through on a pull in the first one-day international against West Indies at Arnos Vale in St. Vincent on Wednesday.



PHOTO: STAR

Rabeya Sultana Preeti of BKSP on her way to the girls' under-18 long jump gold on the second and concluding day of the Milk Vita 22nd National Junior Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Wednesday.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Premier Football League delayed

SPORTS REPORTER

Historically the Premier League never started on schedule. The coveted domestic football competition always let loose last minute drama and this time around the 10-team event, scheduled to kick off on May 20, have been deferred by eight days for a different reason.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided to take that extra week in an effort to win a suitable sponsorship deal, which was yet to be finalised on Thursday.

The most exciting domestic football competition will now kick off on May 28 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium provided everything goes according to the will of the organisers.

It was learnt that two mobile operators of the country are in hot pursuit to become the title sponsor of the double-leg League.

The Metropolis Football League Committee, who runs the show, however pointed at two reasons for the delayed start -- the unavailability of floodlight and the AFC Cup engagement of the two powerhouses Brothers Union and Muktijoddha on May 25.

But that excuse belies any logic since the AFC Cup fixture had been announced last year.

It was learnt that Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) officials stepped into the sponsorship negotiating following an alleged internal feud between the federation and the league committee that delayed the deal.

"The floodlights will not be available before May 24. The AFC will also not allow us to use the ground for two days for the AFC Cup match between Brothers and Nejme. We will have to stop the League after three days only. So we preferred a delayed start than to interrupt it," said BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal.

However, League committee secretary Mozammel Haque Mukta admitted that the sponsor issue was one of the reasons behind the delay.

"It is very important and I must say it is better to settle the sponsorship deal before the League starts," said Mukta.

Pakistan 175/8

STAR SPORT MONITOR

Pakistan were struggling at 175 for 8 in 40 overs after sent into bat by the West Indies in the first one-day international at Arnos Vale in St. Vincent on Wednesday.

Thorpe to fight for place



BBC ONLINE, undated

Graham Thorpe has promised to fight tooth and nail to hang onto his England Test place this summer.

The 35-year-old Surrey batsman is the team's most experienced player with 98 Test appearances and more than 6,600 runs to his credit.

But he has been struggling with a back problem and his place is under threat from the likes of Kevin Pietersen.

"At the moment I'm in possession and I'm going to enjoy every day which I get playing for England," said Thorpe.

"I don't think it's going to be too long before you see Kevin Pietersen playing Test matches for England."

"There are also lots of other good players out there."

"Robert Key, who I thought was very unlucky to miss out on the Test squad (against Bangladesh), he's

an exceptional player and you've still got Mark Butcher in the wings. That's good for the English game."

Thorpe returned to action for Surrey in Tuesday's Cheltenham and Gloucester Trophy victory over Gloucestershire after missing two games because of his back.

He has been short of runs this summer and managed only 13 at



GRAHAM THORPE

BKSP FINISH ATOP

National Junior Athletics end

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohan Khan of BKSP finished as the fastest man of the Milk Vita 22nd National Junior Athletics Cham-pionships when he won the 100m sprint in under-18 category at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mohan clocked 11.20s on the grass track at the grand venue on the final day of the two-day meet. His BKSP mate Nazmul Hossain achieved the same feat in the U-15 category with a timing of 11.50s.

In the girls' 100m sprints, Sonia Khanam of Narail clinched the U-18 gold finishing in 13.40s while Setu Akhter of Kishoreganj became U-15 champion with same timing.

After the rain-interrupted opening day, 32 events were completed on the final day with two new junior records.

BKSP student Sajib Hasan set a new mark in U-15 long jump when he crossed a distance of 1.66m to surpass the previous record of 1.44m while Shamima Akhter Pinky from Chittagong broke the old shot put record (U-18) of 8.64m with a hurl of 8.78m.

The students of country's lone sports institute also established their supremacy in the overall standings finishing with highest 13 gold, 8 silver and 6 bronze medals.

Narail bagged the second position securing 8 gold, 4 silver and as many bronze while Kishoreganj followed them with 6 gold, 2 silver and as many bronze.

Khulna (3 gold), Naogaon (2), Chittagong (2), Rajshahi (2), Noakhali (1), Pabna (1), Manikganj (1) and Pirojpur (1) were the other teams to secure gold medals.

A total of 392 athletes including 268 boys and 124 girls from 43 teams took part in the competition.

'Sack me if you dare'



REUTERS, Johannesburg

Coach Ray Jennings sent South Africa's cricket board a defiant message on Wednesday, arguing his record was too good for him to be sacked.

Jennings, returning with his squad from the Caribbean after beating West Indies 2-0 over four Tests and whitewashing them 5-0 in the one-dayers, told reporters: "If I've been unsuccessful then they must throw me out, but if I've done well then they must back me."

The United Cricket Board are set to announce the appointment of a full-time coach on Thursday. Media speculation has been rife that Jennings, appointed as interim coach in September last year, will be replaced by Eastern Cape Warriors and former South Africa A coach Mickey Arthur.

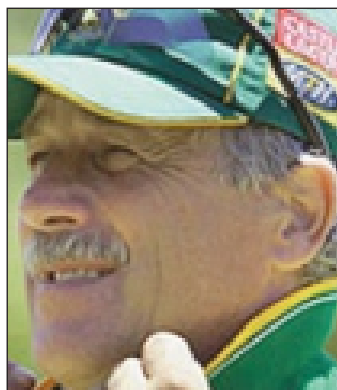
"I was called a big mouth when I said we were aiming for a whitewash in the West Indies and I was not backed 100 per cent. But I've showed it was not out of the question," Jennings added.

"I could write a chapter on how each player has sharpened up and I believe I've added value. The passion and the energy levels that were so lacking when I took over are back, and arriving back in South Africa I can see the enthusiasm for cricket is alive

and well again."

Jennings, a tough-talking, innovative thinker, said he did not believe personal popularity mattered.

"I don't want to be likeable but losing, I have ruffled a few feathers, but that's good because I would hate to believe the players think I'm a great guy. Sometimes good guys come second and everyone has said South



RAY JENNINGS

African cricket's vision should be to be number one in the world."

United Cricket Board president Ray Mali was at Johannesburg International Airport to welcome the team back.

"One year ago, things were not so good, but Ray, you have done well, you have done us proud," Mali told

the coach at a news conference. "This is the birth of a new era and South African cricket is on the up again."

South African captain Graeme Smith praised his bowlers for their efforts on the flat West Indian pitches.

"The bowling attack has been a revelation because the big question was how we were going to take 20 wickets. Makhaya Ntini and Andre Nel really stepped up and deserve a lot of credit," he said.

Women's kabaddi starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Women's Kabaddi League begins today at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex.

This will be the first women's league in the country in 23 years. The Metropolis Sports Association organised the last league in 1982. They also organised the National Women's Kabaddi League in Comilla in the same year.

Azad Sporting Club will take on Village Defence Party and Bangladesh Ansar face Dhaka in the opening day's fixture of the four-team meet.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman will inaugurate the three-day meet at 4pm.