

Tapash to the rescue as Mashrafee sidelined

Close not paying attention?



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Paceman Tapash Baisya was due to arrive in the Sri Lanka at mid-day Tuesday after strike bowler Mashrafee Bin Mortuza became an injury doubt ahead of the three-match one-day series against the hosts.

And the Sylhet paceman would get down to business straightaway as he was included in the 12-member squad in place of Mashrafe for the first ODI on Wednesday. The Bangladesh think-tank on Monday named Manjurul Islam Rana as the super-sub. Left-arm paceman Syed Rasel would make his debut and Tushar Imran, fresh from a healthy tour of England with the A side, replaced Rajin Saleh at the top of the batting order. Abdur Razzak Raj was the other player to be dropped.

Mashrafee would miss at least tomorrow's first one-day international after complaining of a back pain. The 'Narail Express' picked an injury during his first over in Sunday's practice match at Moratuwa, which the Tigers lost by ten wickets. He was replaced by super-sub Abdur Razzak.

"He withdrew from the match yesterday," said team physio Paul

Close Monday morning during training at the Nondescript Cricket ground.

"He is suffering from lower back pain and the assessment is that it's a muscle type injury. He made the right choice by pulling himself out of the game. It was not severe but enough to be worrying for him. But the move was a precautionary thing from his point of view," Close said.

"His condition is not better from

yesterday and I think we are looking forward to get him back within four or five days.

"At this stage we are pretty confident that it is a muscle injury. Doing an X-ray or a scan won't give us any extra information," he added when asked whether the pacer needed any further investigation.

Although Close claimed that he had no information about

Mashrafee carrying an injury to the tour, sources said that the fast bowler had complained about back pains after returning from the South African trip for the Afro-Asian Cup.

Close also reportedly snubbed Mashrafee on the eve of the practice match saying 'I'll talk after dinner'

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PHOTO: STAR

Participating schools in the Pran-Cola football competition queue up after the march past during the meet's inauguration at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Monday.

Beginning of Aussie end?



REUTERS, Nottingham

Australia have been saying for years that they wanted a game from their oldest rivals.

Whether they quite had Edgbaston, Old Trafford and Trent Bridge in mind is another matter.

To have been outplayed once by England was unfortunate. For it to happen twice, and then a third time in going 2-1 down with one to play in the five-match Ashes series, will probably be judged as unpardonable by their supporters and selectors.

No one will know that better than Australia captain Ricky Ponting.

Heads will surely roll in the com-

ing months, even if the marvellously resilient Australians somehow turn back the clock in the fifth and final Test at The Oval next month to level matters and retain the Ashes.

Whatever happens, there is an unmistakable sense of an era approaching its end, a dynasty precariously short of worthy successors. The whispers began during the second Test and have grown to a clamour since.

Ponting is a world-class batsman but knows he will go down in history as, at best, the man who failed to extend Australia's record run of eight Ashes triumphs in a row.

His cheeky early-tour grin long gone, he has consistently been out-thought by his England counterpart Michael Vaughan.

Ponting admitted blundering by putting England in first at Edgbaston, a decision which reportedly led to frank words with a less-than-impressed Shane Warne. Australia denied a rift but duly lost the match, albeit by two runs.

At Trent Bridge, Ponting lost his cool after being run out by a specialist substitute fielder. Spraying abuse liberally, he headed straight into a hearing with the match referee.

The resulting fine mattered less than England's delight at having rattled the world champions' captain.

If Ponting's neck feels exposed, so will too that of Australia coach John Buchanan.

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Russel-2, YMC-2

SPORTS REPORTER

Moroccan forward Majid struck twice as last year runners-up Sheikh Russel drew 2-2 against relegation-bound Young-mens Club Fakirerpool in the Premier Bank Premier Division Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The outcome pushed last season surprise package Russel's collection to 23 points from 16 matches. They remain in fifth position while Youngmens were second from bottom with 12 points from the same number of outings.

Impressive Youngmens took a 1-0 lead in the first half when Robin found the net by a right-footed

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School soccer on

SPORTS REPORTER

The Pran-Cola school football tournament got off to a colorful start at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Education Minister Dr Osman Faruque inaugurated the meet at the

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England take Ashes lead

Hosts survive Warne scare to win by 3 wkts



AFP, Nottingham

England survived a superb Shane Warne spell to win the fourth Test against Australia by three wickets and go 2-1 up in the Ashes series following a dramatic finale at Trent Bridge here Sunday.

Set a modest 129 to win, after Australia made 387 following-on, England collapsed to 57 for four as legendary leg-spinner Warne took three wickets for seven runs in 29 balls.

That soon became 116 for seven before Ashley Giles (seven not out) and Matthew Hoggard (eight not out) saw England home, with Giles clipping Warne leg-side for the winning runs.

Warne, who bowled unchanged, finished with four for 31 from 13.5 overs while Brett Lee finished with 3-51.

Victory, with more than a day to

spare, left England ahead in the five-match encounter with just next month's final Test at The Oval to come and meant they'd ended a run of eight successive series defeats against Australia.

But Australia could still retain the Ashes with a win in London.

"There were plenty of nerves in the dressing room," admitted England skipper Michael Vaughan.

"It was an epic match and it shows what this series has been all about. We managed to get over the finish line and now we have to make sure we go to The Oval in our best form.

"I'm sure that, like the three previous matches, it will be a nailbiting affair."

Australian skipper Ricky Ponting admitted that his side have a lot of work to do despite the fine efforts of Warne and Lee on Sunday.

"We have a lot of work to do and we have to improve our batting. We are just staying in the game and we hope to rectify that next time.

"We had our backs against the wall and we just couldn't get the

wickets we needed."

England, whose first innings total of 477 was built around a sixth-wicket stand of 177 between man of the match Andrew Flintoff and Geraint Jones, saw the duo take them close to the winning post before Flintoff was bowled by a superb Lee delivery for 26.

At 111 for six, England were still far from home and there was another twist in the tail when Jones, in a moment of rashness, tried to hit Warne over the top only to hole out to Michael Kasprovicz at mid-off for three.

That left England still a tantalising 13 runs short of their target.

Then a no-ball from Lee left England 10 shy.

Hoggard, to the delight of the capacity crowd, then struck a Lee full toss to the cover boundary to leave England four away before Giles finished the job.

England, who last won an Ashes series in 1986-87, were facing an

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India swallow Zimbabwe



AFP, Harare

Irfan Pathan and Ajit Agarkar took nine wickets between them to inspire India to a 161-run win over Zimbabwe in a one-day international at the Harare Sports Club here Monday.

After being put in to bat by Zimbabwe, India laboured in the early part of their innings, but battling half centuries from Mohammad Kaif, Mahendra Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh saw India amass 226 for the loss of six wickets from their 50 allotted overs, which was probably 40 or 50 below their expectations.

Zimbabwe failed to even get close to the modest total, and crumbled in all too familiar fashion. They finished all out for 65 runs, or 161 short, after just 23 overs.

The architects of the home side's collapse were Pathan (5-27) and Agarkar (4-18), who cut a swathe through a woeful batting line-up in which only two batsmen made double figures, four registered ducks and the third highest score was extras, at nine.

"We couldn't hit the straight ball," said Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu. "There is so much work to do."

The home side also lost the opening game of this triangular series, going down by 192 runs to New Zealand.

Indian captain Sourav Ganguly certainly had his eye on their next game with the Kiwis after dismissing Zimbabwe.

"We batted quite well, but we need to get partnerships together at the top of the innings," he said.

"That will be essential against New Zealand in our next match."

Now Zimbabwe take up their role formally as makeweights with eight days and three matches still to go in the series.

The match began with India being the side in trouble. Virender Sehwag, who was suffering from a fever, was replaced by Venugopala Rao, who was out with the fifth ball of the day.

Ganguly looked unsettled and he eventually scooped a ball from

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PHOTO: AFP

An aerial Mahendra Dhoni plays a cut shot during their triangular series one-day international against Zimbabwe at Harare on Monday.



STAR Sports

Primera Liga

Real Madrid vs Cadiz

Taped Version at 2:30 pm

TEN Sports

US Open

Men's & Women's 1st Round

Live at 9:00 pm



Premier Football League

Arambagh vs Dipali Sangha (5:00 pm)

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium