

Not picking Shah criminal: coach

AFP, London

Middlesex coach John Emburey has described England's failure to pick Owais Shah for the tour of Pakistan as "criminal".

Kashmir-born Shah has been the leading batsman in English county cricket this summer and Emburey said he deserved to have been rewarded with a recall to the one-day squad that will tour Pakistan from next month.

"The fact that he's not there to me is criminal," Emburey told the BBC.

"He's going to have to bat like Don Bradman to play any better than he has done this year."

Shah, 27, has just enjoyed his finest season for Middlesex, scoring a total of 1,656 runs at an average of 69.

But that record was not enough to convince the selectors, who appear unwilling to forget Shah's 15 previous England appearances, which brought him only 283 runs at a disappointing average of 21.76 before he was dropped two-and-a-half years ago.

Emburey suspects that a niggling knee problem may have counted against the batsman.

Kacharipara

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slammed a hattrick as Naba Nabin Samabesh enjoyed a goal feast in a 7-1 victory over Abdul Latif Smriti Sangsad of Gopalganj.

Jahangir, Arafat, Ripon and Ripon Khan added one each to the winners' tally while Saiful netted the lone goal for the losers.

The winners will meet Kushtia Crescent Club, who registered a solitary goal victory over Jhenidah Mohammedan SC, in the semifinals. Khaled netted the match-winner.

Moontlight Club reached the group semifinal beating Sonali Dhara Club of Kurigram 3-1 at the National Stadium.

Panique struck twice and Azizur scored once for the winners while Hasanur netted one for the losers.

Two other scheduled matches at Feni and Khulna could not take place due to dawn-to-dusk curfew.

Reflections

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Whatmore also informed that the batting order was changed to give Shahriar Nafees some more freedom.

"We felt that Mafrau would Nafees a bit. We had upped as another opener and there was nothing to lose by making the change. I am happy that it worked for once. Iqbal got 35 and Shahriar made 50," said Whatmore with a rare smile on his face.

Confidence sorely

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front of first slip. It was Fernando's 50th Test wicket.

Mohammad Ashraful and Aftab Ahmed, the best future prospects of the country, tried to settle down but even the best Bangladesh stand was not worth 50 runs.

Ashraful, the only player who showed some confidence, played with his usual flair and authority to top score (41 of 42 balls). It was great to watch as long as it lasted. After taking a bouncer on his arm, Ashraful counter-attacked Fernando with a glanced four and hooked a six off successive balls. He lofted Muralitharan's last ball before lunch to the midwicket fence and came back to rattle 19 runs off paceman Fernando in the third over of the second session with a six over midwicket and two boundaries through covers.

He should have calmed down when the Marvan Atapattu set a trap, bowling short with fielders at deep-fine leg, long-leg and deep square-leg. He tried to break the shackles by improvising and just like the first Test when he lofted the ball to the cover fielder, Ashraful skied the ball in an attempt to clear the mid-on fielder for an easy catch.

Fernando scalped a fast catch to complete his third 5-wicket haul in Test cricket. The rest was easy picking for Muttiah Muralitharan.

Sania crashes out of Sunfeast Open

PTI, Kolkata

The fizz went out of the WTA Sunfeast Open on Wednesday as crowd favourite Sania Mirza crashed out of the tournament losing to the much lower ranked Hungarian Melinda Czink in a closely fought three-setter in the second round.

Czink relied on her powerful forehand to stage a remarkable comeback after being completely outplayed in the first set to finish off with a 0-6, 6-4, 6-4 win and book a berth in the quarterfinal.

The partisan crowd at the Netaji Indoor Stadium had a whale of a time in the first set cheering every aggressive shot by the 34th ranked Mirza, who looked unstoppable.

But the complexion of the match changed soon as Sania's serve completely deserted her and she lapsed into frequent unforced errors, losing her confidence in the process.

In contrast, the 122-ranked Hungarian grew in confidence as the match progressed and sent down delightful winners to close the match in a little less than two hours.

'I was shot at in India'

Cricket

AFP/REUTERS, New Delhi

England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff's claim that he was shot at while fielding during a one-day international in New Delhi in 2002 was scoffed at by Indian cricket officials here on Wednesday.

Flintoff, who inspired England to an Ashes triumph over Australia earlier this month, made the startling revelation in his forthcoming book 'Being Freddie' whose extracts were carried by the Times newspaper in London.

"I felt something hit me and, looking down, saw pellets on the ground," Flintoff wrote, referring to the one-day at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground in the Indian capital in January 2002.

"You expect to have plastic bottles thrown at you when you are playing on the sub-continent, but you don't expect to be shot."

Flintoff said the English team management played down the incident, but New Delhi cricket officials said they were not taking the all-rounder's claim seriously.

"This is the first time I am hearing of it," said Chand Khanna, a senior official of the Delhi and District

Cricket Association (DDCA) and a vice-president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"If such a thing actually happened, why did the England team keep quiet about it?"

"No one told us a thing then or after the tour. He can't be serious."



ANDREW FLINTOFF

Delhi police, however, also expressed surprise at the claims.

"If there was any such thing at that time it would have been brought to our attention and action taken. To bring this up after such a long time ... Delhi police has nothing on this matter," spokesman Ravi

Pawar told Reuters on Wednesday.

Flintoff claims he was himself rattled by the team management's decision to play down the incident.

"Nasser Hussain (the captain) got very heated about it in the middle and Phil Neale, the tour manager, came to find out what was going on, but the whole thing seemed to get swept under the carpet," Flintoff wrote.

"There was a big story back home to do with crowd disturbances, but Andrew Walpole, the England and Wales Cricket Board's media relations manager, told me to play the incident down when I was interviewed the following day."

"Looking back now, I think I should have made more of a stand because I wasn't there to be shot at. We explained it away as the crowd just being overexcited at the time, but I wasn't sure about that at all."

England had initially raised safety concerns over travelling to the sub-continent, the tour coming soon after the September 11 attacks in the US, before being cleared to tour by security officials.

Indian cricket stadia are heavily guarded during international games due to the huge crowds that turn up. Spectators are barred from even carrying water bottles and mobile phones inside the venue.

Streak slows

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before he edged the fifth ball he faced to wicketkeeper Latenda Taibu as he drove expansively at a Mahwire delivery angled across the left-hander.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the tea on the second day of the second cricket Test between Zimbabwe and India at Harare Sports Club on Wednesday:

ZIMBABWE: First innings 161 (Coventry 37, Mazakadsa 27; Pathan 7-59).

INDIA: First innings (overnight 195-1)

Gambhir c Taibu b Mahwire 97

Sehwag c Taibu b Streak 44

Dravid b Mahwire 98

Laxman lbw b Streak 8

Ganguly c Taibu b Mwayanenga 16

Yuvraj b Streak 25

Karthik b Streak 1

Pathan not out 8

Kumble not out 0

Extras: (b-2, lb-1, nb-8) 21

Total: (For 7 wkt in 95 overs) 318

Fall of wickets: 1-75, 2-198, 3-219, 4-245, 5-306, 6-306, 7-318

To bat: Harbhajan, Zaheer

Bowler O M R W

Streak 26 9 52 4

Mahwire 25 5 82 2

Blignaut 14 1 57 0

Mwayanenga 21 6 79 1

Dabengwa 9 1 35 0

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Muralitharan 7 2 22 1

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