

Rajani in, Zahed out of SAFF squad

SPORTS REPORTER

The national football team's final preparation for next month's SAFF Football Championship in Pakistan will start on November 12 at BKSP with 24 footballers.

Zahed Parvez was the only player to be dropped from the squad, which toured Myanmar this month to play in the Grand Royal Challenge Cup. The Abahani midfielder was replaced by Rajani Kanta Barman, Bangladesh's SAFF Championship winning captain who was ignored for the Myanmar trip for injury.

A 20-member final team will be named at the end of the 21-day camp.

Coach Diego Cruciani finalised the squad last night after a meeting with Rajani, who assured the coach that he is fit to join camp.

"Zahed is the youngest member of the squad and we are considering him for the SAF Games soccer in Sri Lanka," told team manager Sayeed Hassan Kanan yesterday.

"Rajani on the other hand, has told the coach today that he is physically and mentally ready to join the camp and serve the nation. The coach asked him a few questions and he was satisfied."

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ALL-ROUND SHOW: Acme batsman Farhad Reza goes down the wicket to pull on way to hammering an unbeaten 65 against Jamuna Bank during their GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League encounter at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. He also shone with the ball taking 3-22.

PHOTO: STAR

Biman almost there

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman outclassed Orion Group to brighten their chance for a semifinal berth in the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League with a massive 187-run win at Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

The third victory put the national flag carrier on top of Group A table with seven points from four matches, two points ahead of star-studded Beximco which play their fourth round game against newcomers Metro Real Estate today.

Habibul Bashar-led Acme pulled off a convincing six-wicket victory in the other Group A encounter at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium which kept their semifinal hopes alive but they will face a tough challenge against Biman in the last group match on Friday to enter into the last four.

In the other match, Ispahani registered their second win defeating pointless Bangla Cat by six wickets at the Fatullah Stadium. With the outcome, Ispahani joined Epyllion and Gazi Tank securing five points but each

of the latter teams have a match in hand.

BIMAN-ORION

Biman recovered from an early collapse riding on an unbroken 103-run seventh wicket partnership between Sajjad Qadir and Mosharraf Hossain to post a challenging total of 241-6 in 50 overs after being sent into bat.

Wicketkeeper Sajjad top scored 79 from 87 deliveries that featured four boundaries and two sixes while Mosharraf belted five fours and two sixes to hit a blazing 42-ball 52.

Former national paceman Saiful Islam initiated the early Biman collapse picking up three wickets for 21.

In reply, Orion wickets fell like ninepins and they were eventually bundled out for 54.

Pacemen Mushfiqur Rahman and Mohammad Sharif and left-arm spinner Mosharraf captured three wickets each for Biman.

ACME-JAMUNA

Young prospect Farhad Reza produced an inspiring all-round performance in his first appearance in the competition to give Acme an easy victory against Jamuna Bank in a low-scoring match at

the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Farhad, who missed the first three games because of his Under-19 duties in Sri Lanka, first picked up 3-22 from seven overs with his gentle medium pace and then made a blistering half-century.

Put into bat, Jamuna were bundled out for paltry 119 in 25.1 overs with opener Rasel making highest 43-ball 35.

Right-arm pacer Alamgir Kabir, who played as a super-sub, was the other Acme successful bowler claiming 3-23 to ensure the Jamuna collapse while Dollar Mahmud took 2-35.

Acme also suffered early setback losing three wickets for 19 but a 58-run fourth wicket stand between Farhad and captain Habibul Bashar consolidated their position.

Acme went to launch with 63-3 in 18 overs and they collected the required runs for victory 8.1 overs after the break losing the wicket of Bashar, who was run out on 21.

Farhad in his unconquered 65 off 73 balls smashed left-arm spinner Ashiqur Rahman for a straight six and a boundary through mid-wicket to finish the game in style.

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Salahuddin to return

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-president Kazi Salahuddin is expected to withdraw his resignation after the Saarc Summit, sources said on Wednesday.

The former star national footballer resigned as BFF vice-president and chairman of the National Team Management Committee (NTMC) after the federation president had ignored a recommendation of the NTMC.

The remaining members of the NTMC also followed in the footsteps of Salahuddin but the BFF, realising its mistake, restored the NTMC's suggestions. They also requested Salahuddin and his associates to reconsider their decision.

It was learned that the members of the NTMC in a recent meeting decided to join the federation as soon as the Saarc Summit was over.

Dhaka-Kolkata Games in Dec!

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has agreed to an Indian proposal to participate in the 'Dhaka-Kolkata Games' in December this year, officials said Wednesday.

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) received the invitation from the Indian Olympic Association in September.

"We welcomed the Indian proposal of joining the Games after receiving green signal from the government," a senior official of BOA told on Wednesday.

"But we have suggested to change the name of the Games to 'Dhaka-Kolkata Games' instead of 'Bangla Games', as proposed by India."

India has floated the idea of such Games following the success of the Punjab Games with Pakistan scheduled for December 21-27 but had been postponed because of the devastating earthquake in Kashmir.

Sources in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said that the Bangladesh government had cleared the Games but the modalities needed to be worked out.

"The paperwork has started, but the modalities have to be worked out by the two NOCs," he said.

S Asian archery in Bangladesh next year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh will host the inaugural South Asian Archery Championship from February 10 to 15 next year.

The decision was taken at the first meeting of South Asian Archery Federation (SAAF) which was set up here on Tuesday with president of Archery Association of India Vijay Kumar Malhotra as its chief.

Nazmul Alam Siddiqui, president of the Bangladesh Archery Association has been nominated the general secretary.

SAAF was originally all set to be set up in Dhaka last year but the plan had to be put on hold following the tsunamis in December that had devastated mainly Sri Lanka, India and other South Asian nations.

The formation of SAAF has already been approved by the world archery body FITA, Malhotra said.

Rookie Rudra routs SL

Cricket

AFP, Rajkot

Teenager Rudra Pratap Singh wrecked Sri Lanka's batting to lead India to a comfortable seven-wicket victory in the sixth one-day international here on Wednesday.

The 19-year-old left-arm seamer grabbed 4-35 in only his third match

and spinner Murali Kartik took 2-42 as India skittled out the tourists for 196 after electing to field first.

India surpassed the modest target in the 35th over as Yuvraj Singh roared back into form with an unbeaten 79 off 67 balls and Mohammad Kaif hit 38 not out on his return from a hamstring injury.

Left-handed Yuvraj, who managed just 45 runs in the previous five matches, smashed nine boundaries and three sixes.

Yuvraj and Kaif put on a winning stand of 105 for the unbroken fourth wicket to give India a commanding 5-1 lead in the seven-match series.

The final match will be played in Baroda on Saturday.

Virender Sehwag led India as regular captain Rahul Dravid was rested, while Sri Lanka were depleted by the absence of star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan due to a hamstring injury.

The tourists continued their dismal performance on their current visit as the top order caved in on what appeared to be good batting conditions at the Madhavrao Scindia Stadium.

Tillakaratne Dilshan top-scored for the tourists with 59, his third consecutive half-century, and Upul Chandana hit 30 off 32 balls.

But five top batsmen failed to cross 20 against an impressive display in the field by the hosts.

"We batted well, bowled well and fielded well," said Sehwag. "The bowlers, especially Rudra Pratap, deserve credit for restricting Sri Lanka to 196 on a good wicket."

"It was nice to see Yuvraj back among the runs. That is indeed a good sign for the future."

Sri Lankan captain Marvan Atapattu rued the absence of Muralitharan but blamed the batsmen for not scoring enough runs.

"We had the best use of the wicket and 196 was just not enough," he said. "Losing Murali was a big blow because the wicket had begun to take turn in the afternoon. But there is just no excuse for the defeat."

Dilshan, who scored a match-winning 81 not out in the previous game at Ahmedabad, boosted the total after Sri Lanka were reduced to 132-7 by the 31st over.

The tourists slumped despite a breezy opening start between left-handers Sanath Jayasuriya and Upul Tharanga, who put on 44 by the eighth over.

Indian openers Gautam Gambhir (28) and Sachin Tendulkar (19) put on 43 before Dilhara Fernando claimed both batsmen in successive overs.

Sehwag fell in Chandana's first over after making a run-a-ball 22 as India slipped to 92-3 in the 17th, but Yuvraj and Kaif guided the hosts to a well-deserved win.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the sixth one-day international between India and Sri Lanka at the Madhavrao Scindia

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PHOTO: AFP

MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: India seamer Rudra Pratap Singh, who took 4-35, is in his final delivery stride during their sixth one-day international against Sri Lanka at Rajkot on Wednesday.

Wasim warns Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Former cricket great Wasim Akram warned Pakistan not to be lulled into a false sense of security by England's poor form in the lead-up to the first Test at Multan starting on Saturday.

England go into the first Test after a six-wicket defeat against Pakistan A in Lahore on Tuesday, a further blow to their build-up after their captain Michael Vaughan injured his right knee a day before.

"Don't get fooled by England's poor form in the lead-up matches. They are a mentally strong side and will be totally different in their attitude and performance in the Tests," Wasim told AFP on Wednesday.

England's much vaunted batting line-up, which excelled during their 2-1 Ashes triumph over Australia two months ago, failed in both the side matches since they arrived in Pakistan two weeks ago.

Even in their 52-run win against

Patron's XI in their tour opener at Rawalpindi, England's top order comprising of opener Andrew Strauss, Vaughan, Ian Bell and Kevin Pietersen flopped in both innings.

Experienced opener Marcus Trescothick hit an unbeaten 124 and 38 in the first match but failed in the second.

Wasim said England looked rusty in the two side matches.

"This happens after you have a huge win. The Ashes win may have relaxed England a bit and they were out of cricket for nearly two months which rusts you a bit," said Wasim, regarded as the best left-arm paceman the game has seen.

Wasim, who took 414 Test wickets and a world record of 502 one-day wickets during his illustrious career, said slick planning is needed to beat a team like England.

"You need extraordinary planning to beat a team like England. Unfortunately our lead up to a series has always been haphazard and I don't know what sort of planning (captain) Inzamamul Haq and (coach Bob

Woolmer have done now," said Wasim, who refused to predict the outcome of the series.

"This has been the most asked question but it's a toughie. Pakistan in Pakistan are strong and England has been progressing well, so the team which proves mentally strongest will win," said Wasim, tipping England left-arm spinner Ashley Giles as the dangerman.

"If Pakistan prepares spin tracks then I think they would face a real threat in Giles who, even though not a great turner of the ball, bowls wicket to wicket and may prove dangerous," said Wasim.

Giles took 17 wickets in the three-match series to guide England to a 1-0 win the last time they toured Pakistan in 2000.

Wasim denied that England's batsmen will find it tough to handle spin in Pakistan.

"England batsmen would not prove weak against spin because they tackled Shane Warne very well in the Ashes against Australia so their confidence must be high," said Wasim.



Did U Know?

Australia's 379-run triumph against West Indies in the first Test (Nov 3-7) is their second biggest victory margin in terms of runs at Brisbane's Gabba, next only to their 384-run win against England in 2002-03.



Danish Kaneria

(Pakistan leg-spinner)

"I have developed a mystery delivery and hope it will confuse the English batsmen."

What to WATCH

ESPN

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Live at 5:00 pm

Sportscentre

Live at 8:30 pm

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English Premier Football League

Man United vs Chelsea

Repeat at 12:30 pm



GP Corporate Cricket League

Araf Apparels vs Gazi Tank

Venue: DCS

Beximco vs Metro Real

Venue: FCS

Security Air Express vs Epyllion

Venue: BKSP

Vaughan's absence to benefit Pakistan: Inzy

Cricket

AFP, Multan

Pakistan cricket captain Inzamam-ul Haq said that his side would benefit in the first Test in Multan starting Saturday if England skipper Michael Vaughan is

ruled out by a knee injury.

England are awaiting an assessment after Vaughan twisted his right knee during their team's lead-up match in Lahore on Monday, a recurrence of an old injury.

They will take a final decision on Vaughan later Wednesday, amid fears that the problem could threaten his place in the entire three-Test series.

"There is no doubt that when your opposing captain is out you get the advantage and we would benefit from Vaughan's absence," Inzamam told AFP.

"Vaughan has been instrumental in England's progress but we wouldn't get complacent if he is ruled out, because mentally they are a very strong side and may overcome it," said Inzamam.

Inzamam added that England's six-wicket loss in the side match against

Pakistan A this week -- a brutal come-down for the team after their Ashes triumph against Australia in September -- was also a plus for Pakistan.

"Our bowlers can take heart from the Pakistan A bowlers and especially the way the young bowlers bowled in the morning sessions," said Inzamam.

The tourists' top order batting also flopped during their 52-run win in the tour opener against a Patron's XI at Rawalpindi last week.

Inzamam played down speculation that Pakistan's hopes of taming England at Multan rest with their spinners.

"I have not seen the pitch as yet but people's opinions that we would only rely on our spinners is exaggeration. We want an equal role for fast bowlers because

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Tendulkar won't change

Cricket

REUTERS, Rajkot

Sachin Tendulkar says he will continue to bat aggressively despite a spate of wear and tear injuries in the last few years.

India's premier batsman has made another successful comeback after six months out following elbow surgery, top-scoring with 93 and 67 not out in the current one-day series against Sri Lanka.

"If I see it, I hit it," Tendulkar told Reuters before the sixth match of the series. "I try and keep everything simple."

Tendulkar said he never had concerns about returning to the national side.

"I've been around long enough. I was pretty confident of my batting obviously, that is where my strength lies," he said.

The 32-year-old Mumbai batsman,

speaking as he fixed cracks in his bat with glue, said it was initially difficult on his return in the first game in Nagpur, where he suffered a strain.

"I was a little tough on my body because I hadn't played a match in six-and-a-half months," he said. "To straightaway get into a match where there was a lot of running around involved."

Tendulkar said the injury also demanded a lot of patience.

"In between it was tough, extremely tough mentally and physically. Mentally probably more because I wanted to get back in action and had to somehow stay away from the action and build all the muscles properly."

Tendulkar burst on to the international scene as a 16-year-old in 1989 and has scored more than 13,000 one-day international runs and 38 centuries, both records.

He also jointly holds the record for most Test centuries (34) with compatriot Sunil Gavaskar and is one of only five batsmen to score more than 10,000

Test runs.



SACHIN TENDULKAR

His feats have taken a heavy toll on his body, however, and he has suffered hand, foot, ankle and finger injuries.

"I'm quite happy that for the first 10 years I didn't miss a single game because of injuries," he said. "That, I

feel, is a positive thing to have happened to me.

"Sometimes things can be very unfortunate. Not because of your fitness, but due to some freakish reasons and you just get injured."

Tendulkar, a former captain of India who has been asked by coach Greg Chappell to be the team's mentor, said he relished helping other players.

"I don't change my approach, whether someone is 15 years junior to me or five or 10 years," he said. "The basic idea is to share one's experiences and thoughts, and I have always done that."

"I've always believed everyone is a student of this game and that nobody can put up his hand and say 'I know everything about this game.'"

Tendulkar's comeback has inspired India, who ended a poor run of one-day form by notching four victories in a row to clinch the seven-match series against Sri Lanka.

He attributed the turnaround to

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--Sports Editor