

Afridi returns for Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan Tuesday included all-rounder Shahid Afridi in their 15-man one-day squad for the last three limited-overs internationals against England, chief selector Wasim Bari said.

Afridi, who holds the record of fastest one-day hundred off 37 balls he made against Sri Lanka in 1997, was banned for one Test and two one-day internationals for damaging the pitch during the second Test against England last month.

"The team is playing well so there was no need to have more changes. We have just recalled Afridi for he has been an important part of Pakistan's one-day team," Bari told AFP.

SQUAD

Inzamamul Haq (captain), Salman Butt, Shoaib Malik, Yasir Hameed, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Shahid Afridi, Yasir Arafat, Kamran Akmal, Abdul Razzaq, Mohammad Sami, Danish Kaneria, Arshad Khan, Shoaib Akhtar, Navedul Hasan, Mohammad Asif.



PHOTO: AP

India's middle-order batsman Yuvraj Singh plays a forward defensive shot on the fourth day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground in New Delhi on Tuesday.

India scent victory



AFP, New Delhi

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble bagged two quick wickets as India looked set Tuesday for an easy win in the second Test against Sri Lanka at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground.

Kumble, who claimed six wickets in the first innings, struck twice as Sri Lanka slumped to 123-5 in their second innings at close on the fourth day after being set an improbable 436-run target by India.

Mahela Jayawardene (nine) was the not out batsman after off-spinner Harbhajan Singh added to Sri Lanka's misery by dismissing Thilan Samaraweera for a duck. With his wicket play was called off for the day.

Sri Lanka, who are still 313 runs adrift of their target, have a full day to play out on a slow pitch after India declared their second innings on 375-6 after gaining a 60-run first innings lead.

In their reply the visitors lost the early wicket of left-hander Avishka Gunawardene (nine), trapped leg-before by seamer Irfan Pathan.

After a brief fightback by skipper Marvan Atapattu (67) and Kumar Sangakkara (33), who added 79 for the second wicket, Sangakkara was dismissed by Ajit Agarkar as he edged one to wicketkeeper Mahendra Dhoni.

Sri Lanka soon fell from 109-1 to 123-5, with Kumble accounting for Atapattu and night-watchman Malinga Bandara (zero) to stifle the visitors' hopes. Atapattu struck 11 fours before being caught and bowled by Kumble and Bandara was trapped leg-before by the experienced spinner four deliveries later.

No side has ever successfully chased such a big score in the fourth

innings of a Test. The record was 418 by the West Indies against Australia in 2003. There have been only two other instances of teams chasing more than 400 for a Test win.

Earlier, Yuvraj Singh and Dhoni slammed unbeaten half-centuries for India.

Yuvraj hit a compact 77 and Dhoni a brisk 51 in a 104-run unbroken stand for the seventh wicket that lasted just an hour.

Runs came briskly as the home side pushed for a win on a venue where they have won their last five Tests.

Yuvraj faced 168 balls during his impressive knock in which he hit 10 fours while wicketkeeper-batsman Dhoni played 52 balls – hitting five fours and two sixes, both off leg-spinner Bandara.

"I had planned to play a big innings but was told a little before our declaration to go for some runs," said Yuvraj.

"A century was not on my mind and I thought the declaration was a very timely one. The fact that we are now about to win the match proves that our planning has been good."

Dhoni, who got to his maiden fifty in his second Test with his second six, survived a chance on 28 when Dilhara Fernando dropped him at long-on off Bandara.

Earlier, Yuvraj added 81 for the sixth wicket with overnight partner Sourav Ganguly (39) to keep the pressure on the visiting side.

Former captain Ganguly scored 17 Tuesday morning before edging a ball from ace spinner Muttiah Muralitharan on to his stumps.

The first Test in Chennai ended in a draw while the third and final match starts in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth

day of the second Test between India and Sri Lanka at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground in New Delhi on Tuesday:

INDIA: First innings 290 (Tendulkar 109, Laxman 69, Ganguly 40; Muralitharan 7-100)

SRI LANKA: First innings 230 (Atapattu 88, Jayawardene 60; Kumble 6-72, Pathan 3-34)

INDIA: Second innings (overnight 237-5)

Gambhir lbw b Vaas	3
Pathan c Sangakkara b Fernando	93
Laxman c Sangakkara b Vaas	11
Tendulkar lbw b Bandara	16
Dravid run out	59
Ganguly b Muralitharan	33
Yuvraj not out	77
Dhoni not out	51
Extras: (b-9, lb-16, nb-7)	32
Total: (For 6 wickets in 105 overs)	375
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-42, 3-86, 4-178, 5-190, 6-271	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	21	4	65	2
Muralitharan	38	5	118	1
Fernando	22	5	75	1
Bandara	20	2	74	1
Dilshan	4	0	18	0

SRI LANKA: Second innings
Gunawardene lbw b Pathan 9
Atapattu c and b Kumble 67
Sangakkara c Dhoni b Agarkar 33
Jayawardene not out 9
Bandara lbw b Kumble 0
Samaraweera c Dravid b Harbhajan 0
Extras: (lb-1, nb-4) 5
Total: (For 5 wickets in 50.3 overs) 123
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-109, 3-19, 4-119, 5-123

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pathan	9	1	30	1
Agarkar	10	3	31	1
Kumble	18	4	34	2
Harbhajan	13.3	4	27	1

Brazil warm up against Russia

REUTERS, Moscow

Defending champions Brazil will play Russia in March as part of their preparations for next year's World Cup in Germany.

"The match has been already confirmed, so has the date. It will take place in Moscow on March 1," Russian Football Union (RFU) spokesman Andrei Malosolov said on Tuesday.

Brazil hope to use the Moscow game to prepare for Croatia, their first opponents in World Cup Group F.

The five-times world champions face Croatia on June 13 before playing Australia and Japan.

Russia, who failed to qualify for the finals, plan to name their new coach before the Euro 2008 qualifying campaign starts in September.

Di Canio defends fascist salute

REUTERS, Rome

Lazio's Paolo di Canio has defended making a raised arm salute at the end of last weekend's 2-1 defeat at Livorno.

The incident happened as the controversial 37-year-old walked off after the final whistle under grandstands containing Lazio fans.

"I saluted my people with what for me is a sign of belonging to a group that holds true values, values of civility against the standardisation that this society imposes upon us," the striker told Italian radio station Radio Spazio Aperto.

"I'm proud to be able to count on such people and I will continue to salute them in this way."

The match in Livorno was as much a conflict of political views as a sporting event. Livorno are known in Italy for the hard left-wing politics of their supporters while Lazio's ultras have often aligned themselves with the far right.

The game was played in a poisonous atmosphere. The home supporters chanted anti-fascist songs while the visitors held up a swastika.

"I was the object of very heavy insults throughout the match, but I didn't react," Di Canio said.

It is not the first time Di Canio has made the raised arm gesture. He was fined 10,000 euros (11,900 dollars) for doing the same at the end of Lazio's win over arch-rivals Roma in January.

Al Ittihad ready for Sao Paulo

AFP, undated

Al Ittihad come face-to-face with a Sao Paulo side weighed down by expectations in an eagerly awaited clash Wednesday between the best teams in Asia and South America, with continental pride at stake.

The prospect of the Saudi giants making the final of the lucrative World Club Championships, and a likely stab at Liverpool, is fuelling their desire to upset the Brazilians in the first semifinal at the Tokyo National Stadium.

Iordanescu, who has instilled discipline and drive in his charges, is used to big games, having taken his native Romania to two World Cup finals.

He also steered Al Ittihad to two consecutive Asian Champions League titles, seeing off the best that countries like Japan, China and South Korea could throw at them, as well as ending Al Ahly's 18-month winning streak.

Iordanescu admitted that they paid the African champions too much respect in their hard-fought 1-0 victory on Sunday, and a more ruthless approach is expected against the Brazilians.

Sao Paulo coach Paulo Autuori already has egg on his face after tipping Al Ahly to beat Al Ittihad, but will not let this blur his vision. He is conscious though that football-crazy Brazil will settle for nothing less than victory.

And he is not underestimating anyone in the competition.

Sao Paulo, also the champions of Brazil, have twice won the previous version of the club championship, the Intercontinental Cup, by beating Barcelona in 1992 and AC Milan in 1993.

Autuori is expected to start with the same side that won the Copa Libertadores in June against Atletico Paranaense, with the possible addition of striker Grafite who has recovered from knee surgery.

Clash of contrasting

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"All four semifinalists are equally powerful. So the team performing well on the given day would be the winner. I don't think there would be any such thing as home advantage for us," said Sharida, who took over the national side at the end of October.

"Bangladesh, as the holders, are a high spirited team. But so are we. I believe in performance and hope to see a very competitive match tomorrow."

Mourinho looks for continued success



AFP, London

Jose Mourinho, just named the BBC Sports Coach of the Year, believes that success is required every season and that all the hard work of last year will come to nothing if Chelsea's Premiership dominance wanes.

The Portuguese coach swept into Stamford Bridge during the summer of 2004 on the back of his European success with Porto and promptly led the Blues to their first domestic crown since 1955, winning the English League Cup along the way for good measure.

They may have been beaten in the semifinals of the Champions League by eventual winners Liverpool, but that did not stop Mourinho being voted the BBC Sports Coach of the Year on Sunday night.

Chelsea are 12 points clear in the Premiership following their 1-0 win over Wigan on Saturday, and although they have been knocked out of the League Cup by Charlton, the Blues will head into the final 16

of the Champions League next year as favourites to go one better than last season.

Mourinho, though, accepted with such high goals, comes a need to deliver the goods time and again.

"I don't say it is difficult because I feel pressure, as I don't feel a lot of



JOSE MOURINHO

pressure, to be fair. But you know you have to get results," the 43-year-old reflected after having picked up his accolade at Sunday

night's live TV show in London.

"You know it's not because of the success two years ago, five or 10 years ago - you have to be successful every year. Because of that, it is difficult.

"So when you are a manager of a club or a national team, you have the job that millions of people think they could have - so it's not very easy in that way."

Mourinho felt the accolade - voted for by the British public - was just as much for the efforts of everyone at Stamford Bridge.

"I feel this award, not as an individual award but as one to Chelsea's success, the success of the team, my players, my club, my board, people who support the club.

"When people recognise what you are doing and you can have trophy of this dimension, of course, it is very nice. I am very flattered."

He added: "What I like is that people recognise that I'm good at my job. Of course I cannot expect Manchester United, Arsenal or Liverpool fans to be in love with me, because I'm trying to take from them what they want."

Real yet to decide on Keane



AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez appeared to rule out a move for former Manchester United skipper Roy Keane on Tuesday.

"Nobody has brought this subject up and we won't until we have played our last two matches," he told Telemadrid TV station.

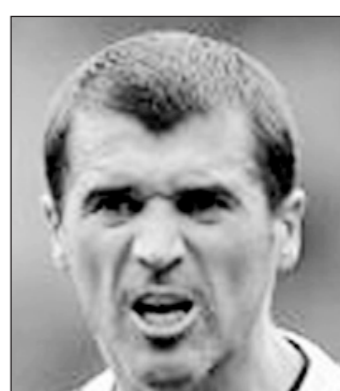
He also said "If we signed all the players the press said we are interested in then we would have a squad of 60 players."

"I don't know any player who would not like to come to Real Madrid, but they all want to appear in the papers and then believe that when they do they are going to sign for Madrid."

"The experience I have shows that no one leaves the club in December and that we have only ever signed one player then and that is (Thomas) Gravesen," said the Real president.

Real face Osasuna and then

Racing Santander, on December 21, before the winter break when the coaching staff will submit proposals for new players in the January



ROY KEANE

transfer window.

A Spanish newspaper report on Sunday suggested the Irish midfielder had already passed a medical for Real, but the claim was dismissed as "completely wrong" by

Keane's representative.

Michael Kennedy, the lawyer who manages Keane's financial affairs, said his client would not be making any decision on his future until Wednesday or Thursday at the earliest.

That would appear to rule out Real after Perez's comments.

Real had emerged as favourites to sign the 34-year-old because it seems Celtic, the club he most wanted to join, are unable or unwilling to put together an acceptable salary package.

Keane, who earned a reported 90,000 pounds-a-week at United, has said he would prefer not to stay in the English Premiership and be forced to play against the club he served for 12 trophy-laden years.

But over half the clubs in the Premiership have expressed an interest in signing Keane.

Bolton and Everton are regarded as the frontrunners as he could switch to them without uprooting his large family from his home south of Manchester.

Fergie blasts media



AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson gave vent to his frustration over Manchester United's faltering season with an angry onslaught against England's daily newspapers, accusing them of harbouring a "hatred" of the club.

Despite claiming that he doesn't read the papers -- who have unanimously proclaimed his reign at Old Trafford to be nearing an end -- Ferguson said the coverage of United's early exit from the Champions League had been motivated by spite.

"They have a hatred of Manchester United," Ferguson told reporters on Tuesday.

"It's always been there. It goes with the territory, I suppose, with us being such a high profile club. I can understand it a little, but they go over the top."

The Scot argued that the press coverage of a perceived crisis at Old Trafford was done with the aim of undermining his squad.

"They are trying to fragment the club; the players from the supporters, and the supporters from the players. But I think our fans are

aware of it. I don't think they will fall into that trap.

"I make the point and I make it strongly, we are at our best when the fans are right behind us. That is the only thing that should matter to us. We have to stick together."

Ferguson urged the United fans to get behind his players when they take on Wigan on Wednesday in a Premiership match they must win to hold on to any hope of catching runaway leaders Chelsea.

"There is always a fantastic role for our fans to play. That has been proved so many times. You just have to look at when we beat Chelsea a few weeks ago, they were up for it. And when they are up for it, we get up for it with them."

Ferguson went on to argue that Chelsea's consistency was exacerbating criticism of the performances of his side.

"If you look at our present points total it is better than four of the last six seasons. Most of the teams below Chelsea would think that they are doing quite well. That's a problem for all of the teams, not just Manchester United."

'Match-fixing by individuals can't be denied'

PTI, Islamabad

Cricketers could still be fixing matches in their individual capacity, fears International Cricket Council president Ehsani Mani while ruling out the possibility of teams being involved in it.

"I can say with confidence that now no match is fixed because we've taken strict measures to examine the entire performance of a team and in the given circumstances it is not possible to fix a match," Mani said during a press conference at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Monday.

"We have put in a lot of efforts to eliminate match fixing and we have gained success in it but the existence of match fixing by individuals cannot be denied," he said.

Mani also said an ICC committee was reviewing whether LBW and dismissals through catches should be decided by the third umpire as was done in Super Series in Australia earlier this year.

Security up in Karachi



AFP, Karachi

Pakistan has imposed tight security at the Karachi cricket ground stadium for the third one-day international against England in the violence-prone port city on Thursday.

England will be the first non-Asian team to play in Karachi since 2002 when New Zealand were here for a Test and a bomb went off outside their hotel, killing 11 French naval engineers. The New Zealanders immediately cancelled the tour and returned home.

Security officials are leaving nothing to chance for Thursday's match in Pakistan's largest city which has been hit by communal riots and bomb blasts.

England rejected the city as a Test venue, did not agree to play back-to-back limited overs internationals, and only agreed to play a one-day match after given assurance of high-level security.

"The safety measures are in order and we are confident that the match will be played in the best of atmosphere," Major General Javed Zia, director general of the paramilitary Rangers, told AFP.

A bomb blast last month just 200 meters (yards) from the five-star hotel where the England team will stay had cast doubts over the match, but assurances from the provincial Sindh government convinced England to play.

"We hope that it will be an enjoyable match," Zia, who will have the command of paramilitary troops and some 2,500 policemen, said.

The England team will travel to Karachi just 24 hours before the match starts and fly back after playing the day-night match on Thursday.

"We have practice scheduled for Wednesday, and would see the security arrangements once the team reaches Karachi," said England and Wales Cricket Board media director Alan Gibson.

Gibson said all the England cricketers had general insurance for

every tour so there was no specific need for the Karachi match.

India played a one-day international here last year on their Pakistan tour but refused to play a five-day Test in the city.

Stringent security measures are in place for a sell-out crowd of 33,000, with all spectators having to prove their identities before being granted entry into the stadium.

Officials said they would open the gates three hours before the scheduled start (11:00 am Pakistan time) to allow police enough time for body searches.

The five-match one-day series is levelled after Pakistan won the second match in Lahore by seven wickets on Monday.

England won the first match by 42 runs on Saturday.

Both remaining games will be played in Rawalpindi (Saturday and Monday).

Sakib alone suffices

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SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the Under-19 tri-nation cricket tournament final match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at BKSP on Tuesday.

SRI LANKA U-19				
Karunaratne c Sonnet b Dollar	15			
Soyza c Rahim b Dollar	1			
Karunanayake st Rahim b Sakib	37			
Fernando lbw Sakib	10			
Serasinghe c Sakib b Rezaul	27			
Mathews c Sohrwardi b Mehrab	65			
Cooray lbw Sohrwardi	2			
Perera c Nabil b Rezaul	30			
Charles run out	4			
Pushpakumara b Sakib	10			
Weerasinghe not out	0			

Extras: (lb-1, nb-5, w-10) 16
Total: (All out in 49.1 overs) 217
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-28, 3-57, 4-90, 5-113, 6-129, 7-183, 8-194, 9-217, 10-217

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Dollar	6	1	23	2
Khadem	4	0	23	0
Nabil	7	0	28	0
Sakib	9	2	39	3
Sohrwardi	10	0	45	1
Rezaul	10	0	36	2
Mehrab	3.1	0	22	1

BANGLADESH U-19
Tamim b Weerasinghe 38
Raqibul lbw Pushpakumara 36
Sakib c Pushpakumara b Karunanayake 100
Shamsur c Karunaratne b Weerasinghe 29

Mehrab not out 4
Rahim not out 2
Extras: (lb-2, nb-1, w-6) 9
Total: (For four wickets in 46.5 overs) 218
Fall of wickets: 1-51, 2-129, 3-197, 4-214

Bowler	O	M	R</
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