



Did U Know?

Irfan Pathan of India took 4/51 in the third ODI against England. It was the fourth time that he has taken four wickets or more in a match, first against England.



Ricky Ponting

(Australia cricet captain)

"He's been like a Glenn McGrath, but five years younger."

On Stuart Clark.



BTv

AFC Challenge Cup
Sri Lanka vs Nepal
Live at 3:30 pm
Pakistan vs Macau
Live at 4:15 pm

BTv World
AFC Challenge Cup
Tajikistan vs Kyrgyzstan
Live at 2:00 pm
Bhutan vs Brunei
Live at 6:00 pm

DD National
India vs England
4th ODI
Live at 9:30 am

BD-SL 2nd A one-dayer today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Bangladesh A will look to continue their good start to the one-day series against Sri Lanka A when they meet in the second one-dayer at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Motiur Rahman Stadium here today.

The two second strings sides, who arrived here yesterday, are expected to play in front of a full house as almost all the tickets have been sold out.

Tushar Imran-led Bangladesh side recorded a 30-run win in the first one-day of the three-match series at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on April 4.

Woolmer hails Asif

REUTERS, *Colombo*

Paceman Mohammad Asif was compared with Australian great Glenn McGrath after he took 11 wickets in Pakistan's unlikely eight-wicket victory in the second Test against Sri Lanka.

Asif, 23, was instrumental in turning the game around after Pakistan fell 109 runs behind on first innings.

Asif claimed five for 27 as Sri Lanka were bowled out for just 73, and finished with 11 for 71 in the match. It was Sri Lanka's second lowest total against Pakistan.

"A wonderful performance from Asif got us back in the game," Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer told reporters.

"When we conceded a 109-run deficit we were looking down the barrel but then Asif started to take wickets and it all started to happen for us.

"The only way Pakistan could win was by bowling out Sri Lanka cheaply but I was looking at a chase of around 250 and to bowl them out for 73 was a shock to us.

"We needed to get through the new ball and then (Muttiah) Murali's first spell - when we did that I was confident that we'd win."

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The Aussies are here



SPORTS REPORTER

The all-conquering Australia cricket team arrive in the city this morning to play their maiden full series in Bangladesh.

Ricky Ponting's men come here after an absorbing series in South Africa where they went down in a high-scoring thriller to lose the five-match ODI series 3-2, but came back strongly to ensure a 3-0 whitewash in the subsequent Test series.

During their 23-day stay in the country the world champions will play two Tests and three one-day internationals against the Tigers in Fatullah and Chittagong.

The Aussies will play the first Test from April 9 at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and then travel to Chittagong to play the second, starting from April 16 at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium where they also play the first one-day game on April 23.

The last two limited-overs games of the three-match series will take

place at Fatullah on April 26 and 28.

Although there is a huge excitement among the cricket-crazy fans of the country, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday informed that the Australian team requested them not to arrange any press conference upon their arrival at 8:30 am by an Emirates flight.

"They are tired after an absorbing series in South Africa and you all know that they have got little break after the series that's why they desired to take a full day's rest after arriving here," said BCB general secretary Mahbubul Anam adding that he was misquoted by an international news agency about extra security arrangement for the Aussies.

"I was misquoted in that report. We will take same security measures we have taken against other visiting teams. And you all know that Australians are very friendly towards their fans so I think they will not deprive their fans here also," he added.

Meanwhile, the cricket-mad people of the country are bubbling with a good feeling as the series will give them the opportunity to watch a galaxy of stars like spin wizard

Shane Warne, young Michael Clarke, dashing Adam Gilchrist, speedster Brett Lee and of course the captain himself in action.

Only three of the current Aussies -- Ponting, Gilchrist and Damien Martyn -- have earlier visited Bangladesh.

However, the fans will definitely miss the presence of one fatherly figure and he is none but the Steve Waugh, who captained Australia during Bangladesh's maiden tour down under in July 2003.

Under the leadership of Khaled Mahud minnows Bangladesh, as expected, lost their previous two Tests but their historic five-wicket success against Australia in a one-day match at Cardiff in June 18 last year gave the series a new dimension.

AFP adds from Sydney, Australia recalled their final Ashes discard Jason Gillespie on Wednesday as selectors made three injury-enforced changes to the squad to face Bangladesh after a gruelling South African series.

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BD-AUS SERIES BCB-GP sign record deal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday termed their record deal with GrameenPhone for the upcoming home series against Australia as a significant one.

GrameenPhone, one of the leading cellular phone companies in the country, has earned the much-talked about title sponsorship rights for the lucrative two-match Test and three-match one-day international series by spending an unprecedented Tk 1.15 crore, the highest amount paid in sponsorship to BCB. "It is really great that we have received such a big amount from the title sponsors for the series which will be our final one in the existing FTP (Future Tour Programme). We can now definitely say that Bangladesh cricket is moving forward," an excited BCB general secretary Mahbubul Anam said at a press conference yesterday.

GrameenPhone managing director Erik Aas also echoed the sentiment that the Tigers are in the right track to ensure much more financial benefit for BCB.

"Apart from sponsoring the team, we are involved with BCB in some other activities. We have struck this record deal as Bangladesh recently won one-day matches against teams like India, Sri Lanka and of course Australia. We want much more from them," wished Aas.

Meanwhile, City Bank will start selling tickets from today through its various city branches.



PHOTO: STAR

GrameenPhone managing director Erik Aas (2nd from L) speaks during a press conference to announce a record sponsorship deal with Bangladesh Cricket Board at a city hotel yesterday.

Dravid wants to seal series now



AGENCIES, *Kochi*

Indian captain Rahul Dravid has urged his team to seal the one-day series against England by winning the fourth match here on Thursday.

"We have done well so far. We do understand it is an important game. If we play some good cricket we can win the series," Dravid said on Wednesday ahead of the key match at the 90,000-capacity Nehru Stadium.

"I do not think we will deviate too much from our plans for this game.

We will try and play the cricket which we played for the last three games."

England, who lost the first three matches, must win on Thursday to remain afloat in the seven-match series.

In the last game played on Monday in the western tourist resort of Goa under hot and humid conditions, England lost by 49 runs.

There will be little reprieve for the tourists in Kochi where it is hotter and more humid than in Goa.

"It is quite hot," said Dravid. "It gets quite hot and humid here. You need a lot of mental strength and

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India, Taipei in last eight

SPORTS REPORTER

India and Chinese Taipei settled for a goalless draw at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong on Wednesday in their final Group A game to reach the quarterfinals of the AFC Challenge Cup.

Both teams have five points each but India topped the group on the basis of better goal difference.

Taipei rushed early blood with Hung-Hsu Tai leading the move in a counter attack in the fifth minute. His shot, however, was parried by Indian goalkeeper Paul Shilton.

The East Asians were again on the move in the 23rd minute but midfielder Fu Hsiang Chang's lob sailed over the bar. Indian substitute Pachau Lalawmpuia's shot on a Pradeep cross in the 34th minute went wide.

Indian coach Islam Akhmedov said: "I can't talk about quality of football today but I am happy with the result. Our strategy was to defend and secure at least a draw today."

Chinese Taipei's Japanese coach Toshiaki Imai was not happy with his players' show but expressed his satisfaction over the result.

In the day's other match in the port city, Afghanistan was held to a 1-1 draw by Philippines in their inconsequential final Group A game.

The match was reduced to academic interest after India and Chinese Taipei played out a goalless draw to ensure their qualification in the second round from this group.

Sayed Maqsood found the net for Afghanistan on a pass from Mohammad Jalal Afshar in the 26th minute. Mark Alvin Valeroso restored the parity for Philippines in the 61st minute.

Guam-Cambodia tie abandoned

SPORTS REPORTER

Inclement weather once again played foul with the AFC Challenge Cup as the Group C finale between Cambodia and Guam at the Bangabandhu National Stadium was abandoned after 39 minutes due to gusty wind and heavy shower last night.

The match was locked goalless between the two bottom-table sides, who were fighting for their first point, when the elements interrupted.

A rematch will take place at the Army Stadium at 2:00 pm.

The organisers, in a bid to avoid the evening disturbance, have brought forward today's match between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to 2:00 pm and Pakistan-Macau game to 4:15 pm at the same venue.

Earlier, the Macau-Kyrgyzstan match was abandoned on Tuesday for the same reason. The rematch will be held tomorrow at 2:00 pm, but the venue was yet to be finalised.

BCB introduces women's wing

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has opened a women's wing to develop and organise women's cricket in the country.

An introductory meeting was held at the BCB management office yesterday headed by Fahima Hossain Jubilee, MP.

It was decided that an exhibition match would be organised between two women's cricket teams soon.

ABU DHABI ODIS Pak confirm full team

PTI, *Karachi*

Pakistan have finalised a strong 14-man squad for the two-match ODI series against India in Abu Dhabi after rejecting a request from some of the players for rest after a gruelling schedule this season.

The team will be officially announced tomorrow but it was confirmed that at least two players, whose identity was not disclosed, had requested for a break, complaining of a backbreaking season in which Pakistan have already played eight Tests and 13 one-day internationals since late October.

According to insiders, the request has been rejected after both the boards had assured the sponsors and organizers to field the best teams for the matches to be played on April 18 and 19.

The three players, who will not be travelling to Abu Dhabi despite being part of the Pakistan one-day squad in Sri Lanka, are Faisal Iqbal, Umar Gul and uncapped Tahir Khan.

Uncapped left-arm spinner Abdul Rehman has been recalled after being relieved from duty for Tests while Rana Navedul Hasan, who had to rush from Colombo after his wife had a miscarriage in a

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh striker Mehdi Hassan Topu (No. 26) accelerates past Palestine defender Al Kord Ziyad during their AFC Challenge Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Wednesday.

Bench pleases Cruciani



SPORTS REPORTER

The impressive performance by the Bangladesh reserve bench has made coach Diego Cruciani a content man after the seniors had put on a rather frustrating show in the first two matches of the AFC Challenge Cup.

The Argentine coach made wholesale changes to the side, who won 2-1 against Cambodia and 3-0 against Guam, bringing in eight players from the bench for yesterday's match against Palestine.

The Group D clash ended in a draw and rookies like Zahed Parvez and debutant Wali Faisal filled in the places of their predecessors perfectly.

"I am very happy because they are very young players and are

playing in their first international tournament. I sent them to the field because I believed in them and they have proved that they are the future of Bangladesh," said Cruciani whose side is expected to face Tajikistan in the quarterfinals unless the Group C pulls off any upset today.

"I would not like to name any single player but the whole team work was satisfactory. Aminul played brilliantly, but we all expect this from him because he is an outstanding goalkeeper. Although we drew against the favourites, I still think Palestine are a better team than us. And we need to improve if we want to advance in the tournament," said the 42-year-old, who had pulled a similar trick against India in the last group match of the SAFF Championship.

"I did it in Pakistan because we were already in the next stage. And now we needed to rest some tired legs, injured players and especially

defender Rajani, who is on one yellow card."

When asked whether the impressive show by the second-string players has given him any selection headache, the coach mentioned that he would wait to know about their opposition in the knockout stage before giving it a thought.

"All matches are final for us and I will pick the best team, mostly with players strong physically and mentally."

When asked about the prospect of meeting Tajikistan, a team higher than Bangladesh in the FIFA rankings, in the last eight, he said that he did not 'believe in FIFA rankings'.

"It is deceptive. Myanmar are lower in ranking but I feel they are a much better side."

Palestine coach Mohammed

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Pakistan's hattrick



AFP, *Kandy*

Imran Farhat and Younis Khan hit half-centuries as Pakistan thrashed Sri Lanka by eight wickets in the second and final Test here on Wednesday to clinch the series 1-0.

Pakistan, who drew the opening Test at Colombo, also completed a hattrick of Test series victories after beating England 2-0 and India 1-0 at home earlier in the season.

The tourists faced no difficult chasing a 183-run target on the third day as left-handed opener Farhat (65) and Younis (73*) batted confidently to ensure victory with a 114-run stand for the second wicket.

Farhat hit 11 fours in his seventh

Test half-century while Younis regained form with his 14th half-century after scoring just 43 in the previous three innings against the hosts.

"It was a great win. The boys were confident after we had conceded a big first-innings lead," said Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq.

"(Mohammad) Asif bowled very well and brought us back into the game. We have been playing good cricket in recent months and hope to keep the momentum going."

The hosts' hopes of defending a modest target depended on ace off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, the only bowler to complete 1,000 wickets in Tests and one-day internationals.

But the spinner failed to taste success on his home ground, just a

day after 20 wickets had fallen on the same track.

"We played bad cricket yesterday and that one hour was really disappointing," said Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene, whose team crashed to 73-8 in the closing session on Tuesday.

"Pakistan deserved to win because they played better cricket in the series."

Sri Lanka needed a couple of early wickets to put pressure on Pakistan, but managed just one in the morning when makeshift opener Kamran Akmal was superbly caught by a diving wicket-keeper Kumar Sangakkara off seamer Lasith Malinga.

Akmal, opening the innings following the withdrawal of Shoaib

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PHOTO: AFP

DELIGHT AND DESPAIR: AC Milan forward Filippo Inzaghi (L) looks to the heavens after scoring his second goal as Lyon goalkeeper Gregory Coupet (R) stands dejected during their Champions League second-leg quarterfinal at the San Siro on Tuesday.