

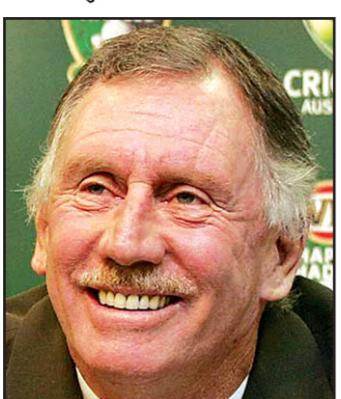


Abahani's national star Russell Mahmud Jimmy (2nd from L) tries to get out of a tight spot as two Usha Krira Chakra defenders hound him during their Shah Sports Club Cup tie at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.



Did U Know?

The synchronized swimming made its first appearance in the Olympics in 1984.



Ian Chappell

(Former Australia cricket captain)
"It is one of my greatest disappointments as a cricket person and former Australia captain that Warne (Shane Warne) has never had the chance to lead the team."



ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports
Mumbai Open Tennis
Live at 5:30 pm

Vengsarkar new chief selector

AFP, Mumbai

Former Test captain Dilip Vengsarkar was elected India's chief cricket selector on Wednesday with ex-spinner Venkatapathy Raju also joining the five-man panel, officials said.

Vengsarkar took over from Kiran More, who completed four years in the job and was not eligible for re-nomination under the rules of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Raju replaced VB Chandrasekhar, while Ranjib Biswas, Sanjay Jagdale and Bhupinder Singh retained their posts at the BCCI's annual general meeting.

The selection committee comprises one elected representative from each of the five zones outlined by the BCCI. The most senior person is made the chairman.

Of the five selectors, only Vengsarkar and Raju have played Test cricket.

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Abahani group champs

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Holders Abahani emerged group champions when they kept their perfect record in the Shah Sports Club Cup hockey tournament with an exciting 4-2 win over title contenders Usha Krira Chakra at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium in yesterday.

The scoreline of the Group A finale, however, looks deceptive as group runners-up Usha -- who stuck to six points compared to Abahani's maximum nine -- could have finished on the winning side had they converted a series of second half chances.

Moudud Rahman Shuba, Asif-e-Noor, Monirul Alam Sumon and Russell Mahmud Jimmy found the net for the sky-blues while Zahidul Islam Rajan, who was at the heart of two

time champions Usha's spirited second-half display, fired back twice.

Abahani, who will take on the second-placed side from Group B -- Mariners or Mohammedan who meet tomorrow in their group decider -- in the semifinals, got a deserved 2-0 first half lead after dominating the first 35 minutes.

Tabib-e-Noor's fumble in the Usha D-box proved costly in the eighth minute as Shuba snatched possession and calmly pushed the ball past goalkeeper Zahid for his fifth goal in three games.

National number one custodian Bappi kept Abahani in the game when he made a superb save on Dinar's penalty corner in the 20th minute, inspiring Asif-e-Noor to double the lead a couple of minutes later with a back-flick after Musa Mia's hardwork at the right flank.

Usha striker Rafiqul Islam Kamal was denied by woodwork before the break and seconds into the second

half, Abahani's first match hattrick hero Sumon made it 3-0 with an angular hit after the Musa-Jimmy combination set him with a nice pass.

The 3-0 cushion made Abahani relax and Usha fight back. Rajan's dazzling runs unsettled the compact Abahani backline led by Isha Mia but Krishna and Rimon spoiled sitters. Both the youngsters mishit their chances with only goalkeeper Bappi to beat and it was Rajan who finally reduced the arrears with a deflected penalty corner in the 48th minute.

Jimmy's brilliance, however, put Abahani beyond Usha's reach as the playmaker weaved his way through four rival players before sounding the board with a neat reverse hit in the 54th minute. Jimmy could have widened the margin but the top stickwielder of the country rattled the post and put

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Tigers' first practice match today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The ICC Champions Trophy-bound cricketers will play their first practice match at BKSP today after returning from a three-day break.

The two practice matches were originally scheduled for last week but were called off due to inclement weather and as a result the players were given an early break to play the practice matches before their departure on October 1.

Selectors have already named

the two squads for the match with skipper Habibul Bashar leading team A against out-of-favour Tushar Imran's team B.

Two injured new-ball bowlers Mashrafee Bin Mortuza and Syed Rasel were not included in the sides and chief selector Faruque Ahmed ruled out any possibility to see any one of the bowlers in the first game, though they were getting better as the tournament approaches.

"Paceman Shahadat (Hossain) also suffered an ankle injury before the break but he is all right along with Mashrafee. But we are still concerned over the condition of

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Rasel. We will discuss everything during the practice match and decide on the issue," said Faruque.

He, however, said that Mashrafee and Rasel have a chance to play the second and final practice match at the same venue on September 30 if they get hundred percent clearance today.

It would also be a good opportunity for Bashar to be assured about his fractured left fifth metacarpal.

Bangladesh's first game in the second biggest competition of ICC is on October 7 in Mohali against Sri Lanka and then they go on

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PHOTO: AFP

Swiss football federation president Ralph Zloczower (R) and his Austrian counterpart Friedrich Stickler present the official mascots of the UEFA European Championships 2008 in Vienna on Wednesday. Three names -- Zagi & Zigi, Flitz & Bitz or Trix & Flix -- have been shortlisted and will be chosen by the fans via the internet.

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BNS inspection goes in vain

SPORTS REPORTER

The ground inspection committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday failed its deadline to give a recommendation about the transfer or the start of the inaugural Professional Football League.

Ten out of the 11-member committee, headed by its convenor and BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal, inspected the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday morning sans a crucial member, National Sports Council (NSC) director of planning and development Nurul Haque Pradhan.

The NSC is in charge of renovation of the ground and it was learned that the NSC director sent his representative to the ground, who is looking after the construction works. In Pradhan's absence, the club representatives of the committee did not get the necessary documents of the shipment of the athletics turf, which was laid at the stadium.

The committee has now decided to wait two more weeks to get a clear about the availability of the ground and give its recommendation to the federation by October 10.

The delay would ultimately serve the purpose of a few influential clubs of the city who have been trying to hold up the league until next year due to crisis of fund.

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Oval hearing begins

Cricket

AFP, London

Inzamamul Haq arrived at The Oval here Wednesday for the start of a hearing where the Pakistani captain will answer disciplinary charges arising from his role in the team's unprecedented forfeit of the fourth Test against England at the south London ground last month.

Inzamam has been accused of ball-tampering, as captain, and bringing cricket into disrepute after Pakistan refused to take the field after tea on the fourth day of the fourth Test against England on August 20.

They did so in protest at the decision of umpires Darrell Hair and Billy Doctrove to penalise them five runs for ball-tampering earlier in the day.

Madugalle has a maximum of 24 hours after the end of the hearing, which is closed to the public, to give his verdict. A decision should, therefore, be announced Friday local time at the Oval.

Pakistan's refusal to take the field meant they forfeited the match -- the first time this had happened in 129 years of Test cricket -- and England were awarded a win which gave them the series 3-0.

Inzamam made no comment as he entered The Oval.

But in Wednesday's edition of the Guardian newspaper he spoke of the "respect" his team's stance had earned with cricket followers back home.

"By God's mercy, I received a lot

of public support. It's a very good thing that the Pakistani people appreciated the stand we took. Respect is the main thing -- it's the first thing that matters.

"Definitely, I did feel some pressure. But inside I resolved that I had done nothing wrong and was satisfied with my actions. That's what helped me.

Meanwhile former Pakistan captain Imran Khan added: "There's been a lot of hurt caused by Darrell Hair calling the team cheats.

"If they (the Pakistan team) want to redeem their honour and pursue the ball-tampering issue, they should have gone to a court of law.

"That would make sure that never again can an umpire -- unless he has clear evidence -- declare a team guilty of cheating. I'm afraid they're barking up the wrong tree by going to the ICC. The ICC gives everything to the umpire."

After the match ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed revealed Hair had sent the world governing body an e-mail saying he would stand down from their elite panel of

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Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq (L) enters the International Cricket Council (ICC) disciplinary hearing as umpire Darrell Hair goes through his papers at The Oval in London on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bell undaunted by Ashes

Cricket

AFP, London

England batsman Ian Bell will head to the Ashes showdown with Australia insisting he has nothing to prove but eyeing a bagful of runs.

The Warwickshire player was part of the side which triumphed 2-1 in 2005 but, despite scoring two centuries in the third Test at Old Trafford, he averaged only 17 in the series.

Bell was then an amateur, having only played three Tests -- including two against minnows Bangladesh -- before the board's management office at Gulshan.

Tournament Committee Chairman Shah Nurul Kabir Shaheen, MP will preside over the meeting, which is likely to discuss the holding of national championships, national league and corporate cricket league.

"I've got some experience of playing against the top players in the world and can go to Australia with that in the bank and I've also got three hundreds in the last four Tests.

"Have I anything to prove in Australia? I don't feel as if I have to prove anything to myself. I would like to score runs against Australia. But I don't think I need to go and prove too much to anyone.

"They would have seen I've scored three hundreds in the last four Tests. They will know that. A lot of Australians play county cricket as well so I don't think I have to prove too much to anyone.

"But it would be nice to go out there and score some runs. I was chuffed to bits to be a part of the Ashes side but would like to do more with that bat this time."

Bell added: "To be part of England retaining the Ashes would be pretty special, especially in their own back yard. That would be great."

"What happened last summer against Australia will always stay in people's minds and it is up to us to go to Australia and compete like we did last year."

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He has not played a one-day international since September last year and was dropped from