

Ganguly days all but over

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian media on Wednesday predicted the end of Sourav Ganguly's cricket career after the former captain failed miserably in a trial one-day series.

The left-hander, making a last-ditch attempt to regain his place in the Indian team, made 24 and three in the two matches he played in the domestic Challenger series in Chennai over the last three days.

Ganguly, playing for India B, slashed a catch to point off Munaf Patel in the first match on Monday against India Seniors captained by Rahul Dravid.

In the second game against India A on Tuesday, he was bowled by Test seamer Shanthakumaran Sreesanth for three.

Ganguly was Wednesday left out of the Rest of India squad for another trial fixture, the five-day Irani Cup match against Ranji Trophy champions Uttar Pradesh starting in Nagpur from October 9.

"Sourav's name was discussed, but he will have to do well in other domestic matches to stay in contention," India's new chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar, a former Test captain, told reporters.

Television channels ran special programmes to highlight Ganguly's failures and the mass-circulating Hindustan Times newspaper said the Challenger series may have dealt the final blow.

"This effort pushes him back to a point from where comeback doors seem to be closed, forever," the newspapers said.

"The Chennai stadium has seen another momentous occasion -- Sourav Ganguly walking into oblivion."

Ganguly, 34, was sacked as captain last year and later dropped from the national side following unfavourable comments from coach Greg Chappell, who said Ganguly was a "disrupting influence" in the team.

The stylish batsman has not played a one-day international since September last year and was omitted from the Test squad after the tour of Pakistan in February.

Ganguly has not been selected for the upcoming Champions Trophy, but he was being regarded as a serious candidate for the year-end tour of South Africa and the World Cup in March, with the floundering Indian team having won just one of its last nine one-dayers.

Epyllion

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players' jersey and on their practice kits.

"It is a lifetime opportunity for us. The idea of our logo carried by the national team gives us immense pleasure and makes us really proud," said Epyllion Group managing director and BCB joint-secretary Reazuddin Al Mamun.

Meanwhile, Mahbub Anam informed that the BCB will invite open tenders for TV rights for the next five years within a week.

"The deadline to submit tenders would be October 31. It would be a two-folder tender with technical evaluation and financial offer," said the BCB general secretary.

"The tenders would be opened in front BCB officials and the media," he said adding that a BCB appointed agent will handle the deal.

Lampard

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and not take to heart what is being said, because we all doubt ourselves in certain moments.

"I had a few weeks off and now I just want to work hard. The only way you can put things right is on the pitch," Lampard added on BBC Radio Five Live.

About time

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English county cricket by batsmen such as Lou Vincent and Hamish Marshall, who were among those who struggled last season.

Marshall could average only 17.43 from 18 one-day innings during the last New Zealand summer season but has performed well for Gloucestershire over the northern summer, averaging just under 61.

"We are confident he will deliver on the faith we have shown in him," Bracewell said.

New Zealand is ranked fourth in the international one day rankings behind Australia, South Africa and Pakistan. Under Fleming, New Zealand has made the most of their limited resources in the shorter form of the game compared to Test cricket, where they are ranked seventh.

New Zealand's opening match at the Champions Trophy is against South Africa on October 15.

WI look on

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and we have no doubt that he will be firing on all cylinders," King said.

"At the camp we've been concentrating a lot on our batting," King said.

"Because of the tournament in Malaysia we need to spend more time on the part of the game that we were weakest and that's the batting.



PHOTO: AFP

Netherlands' Sylvia Karres (L) takes the ball away from Germany's Marion Rodewald during Women's World Cup Hockey match in Madrid on Wednesday. The match ended 0-0.

Dutch cruise into semis



AFP, Madrid

The Netherlands maintained their unbeaten record in its pool games after eeking out a 0-0 draw with Germany in the women's field hockey World Cup here on Wednesday.

Dutch coach Marc Lammers was in an understandably buoyant mood about his team after the game, and said thoughts had now turned to the possible semifinal line-up, which will be decided after Wednesday's games between Spain and England, and Argentina and Australia.

"We don't care who we play in the semifinals, both Argentina and Australia are good teams," Lammers said.

"The mood is very good in our team and all our players are fit except for a bruise here or there."

The match between the Dutch, who finished on 13 points after their pool games, and the Germans was in effect a dead rubber, having no outcome on the tournament play-offs.

But games between these traditional hockey rivals are always keenly contested, even if it is only for bragging rights.

Accordingly, neither side gave an inch, and the game featured some skilful, end-to-end play that saw German goalkeeper Yvonne Frank called into action to produce some excellent saves in the first half.

Germany ended their pool games on seven points, and they are destined for the 5-8 play-offs on Friday. Their rivals in that match will not be decided until later

Wednesday.

In the mix with Germany will be Japan, who outclassed South Africa to seal an emphatic 3-0 win.

Japan opened brightly with Tomomi Komori scoring in the third minute and Keiko Miura scored from a corner in the ninth minute to bury a South Africa side unable to change their game plan.

Komori made the game safe just on the stroke of half-time with another corner goal.

Japan finished the pool round on five points and must wait for the South Korea v USA match later Wednesday to confirm their schedule for Friday's play-offs.

The final positions might be determined on goal differences if their match is drawn.

Percy carps BCCI rigidity



CRICINFO, undated

Percy Sonn, the International Cricket Council president, has said that the Indian board's refusal to sign the Members' Participation Agreement (MPA) could put the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 in jeopardy.

"If the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) fails to agree to the terms of the MPA, it will of course mean that they could not continue as one of the joint hosts of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011, thus putting the entire tournament in jeopardy. Having said that, we hope agreement can be reached and that common sense will prevail," he said.

While almost all the other ICC members are ready to sign the MPA -- which covers major ICC events for the period 2007-2015 -- the Indian board announced last week that it would not sign it in its present form.

The MPA lays down guidelines and restrictions that the players must follow, including those that deal with ambush marketing. According to reports, the Indian board has sent a copy of the MPA to Rahul Dravid, the Indian captain, and it will only take a decision once

he has responded.

Sonn claimed that the new MPA addresses Indian concerns. "The new MPA is significantly more flexible than the agreements that regulate participation in ICC events through to 2007. In particular, the MPA addresses all areas of concern raised by Indian players ahead of previous ICC events and provides more scope for players and boards to maintain their own interests," he said.

"Six months ago we circulated the MPA for our events from 2007-2015 to our Members for comment and over the subsequent months we have had extensive and fruitful negotiations with many of our Members that have helped us develop the contents of the agreement to suit our mutual needs. It is thus very disappointing that the BCCI has only recently been able to review the agreement and raise its concerns," he added.

The ICC gave the BCCI seven more days (from Tuesday) to notify if of any difficulties it has with the MPA.

Bashar slightly

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problem was our fielding. I couldn't understand why we suddenly lost our rhythm. I think our body language was not good when we were fielding," said Bashar who was also guilty yesterday letting down an easy catch.

Fielding coach Mohammad Salahuddin echoed the captain's dismay on the team's poor fielding effort which started from the recently-concluded Africa tour.

"I think some of players' body language was not up to the mark which is a sign behind sluggish fielding, especially Shahriar Nafees who missed too many balls," explained Salahuddin.

"I am trying to talk with everybody to overcome the problem and hopeful they will understand it soon," he added.

Kaka is my heir

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Drogba.

As a result there have been rumours suggesting he may consider a return to Italy, whispers that he immediately dismissed.

"I am glad about the choice I made, this is the life I chose for myself and my family, life goes beyond football," he added.

"My move had nothing to do with the money and life for a football player is easier in London.

"It's much more simple and there is not all the pressure there is in Italy, football is a show that finishes once the game is over.

"This is the truth behind my move. If someone doesn't believe me it's maybe because they are not used to saying the truth," concluded Sheva.

Full marks to Komolkoli

UNB, Dhaka

Nandipara Komolkoli Shangsad drubbed Red Sun KC 3-0 in a Pioneer Football Super League match at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur today (Wednesday).

Bilas struck twice while Bakul netted the other goal for the winners.

In the day's other match, Tongi Kirira Chakra shared points with Noor Sporting Club in a goalless draw at the same venue.

the Champions Trophy.

"We've got a pretty good structure in place and if each guy looks after themselves and keeps trying to make themselves better day in and day out, then we will go a long way in the Champions Trophy."

McGrath, who is the sixth all-time leading ODI wicket-taker with 225, is steadily working his way back into form after his first stint at the bowling crease since taking time off last January to look after his ill wife.

McGrath, 36, claimed just one wicket in four limited-overs matches

and struggled for rhythm at times, but is looking to recapture his best touch in India.

"I feel I'm heading in the right direction," McGrath said. "We'll be focused on bringing that ICC Champions Trophy home and then we start thinking about the Ashes.

"India is probably the toughest conditions for a fast bowler," he said.

"The wickets are pretty flat over there and the conditions are reasonably pleasant to bowl in."

CHAMPIONS TROPHY Gayle propels West Indies

AFP, Ahmedabad

West Indies opener Chris Gayle tuned up for the Champions Trophy with a blistering 101 off 82 balls in a practice match here on Wednesday.

The left-hander smashed 13 fours and three sixes before retiring to the pavilion as the West Indies piled up 344-5 from 45 overs against a Gujarat team at the Motera stadium.

Runako Morton hit a run-a-ball 91 during a second-wicket stand of 227 with Gayle and Wavell Hinds made 61 off 58 balls.

The tourists won by 173 runs as the locals were restricted to 171-6 despite batting for 50 overs. Seamers Corey Collymore, Dwayne Smith and Dwayne Bravo picked up two wickets each.

BRIEF SCORES

WEST INDIES: 344-5 in 45 overs (Gayle 101 retired, Morton 91, Hinds 61; Makda 3-65).

GUJARAT XI: 171-6 in 50 overs (Patel 37; Collymore 2-45, Smith 2-16, Bravo 2-21).

Shooting

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yesterday told reporters that he was called into the meeting and told not to 'poke their noses' into the federation's matters.

"The federation president (Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury) told me that the federation does not like our action. He added that we are ex-shooters and do not belong to the federation anymore, so we should mind our own business," said Gaffar.

"Asif was my student. Not only that, we feel every fellow shooter is like a relative. That's why we are here to stand behind them. We are all unhappy at the way the president treated us today," he added.

Mueyed Chowdhury, meanwhile, kept himself in the middle of controversy. Having avoided the press for two days, he briefly encountered the reporters during a break in the meeting and said he has done everything possible to get bail for the arrestees and the treatment of the injured.

The NSF chief then hastily made his way through the surrounding media men, refusing to make any comments on the 'nature of the police attack'. It was surprising to see the president giving no statement yet on a grave issue like this.

Seriously injured shooters Asif and Shuebuzaman were still in hospital and uncertain when they would be released.

Asif was not concerned about his condition rather he was worried about his future.

"I have got many things from the country and also given much. But I feel that I have now lost everything. My willpower would not be enough to bring me back to the range. Being out of the range for six months means I would hardly get back my original form," Asif told from his hospital bed.

Showing the plastered left hand, the Commonwealth Games and SA Games gold medalist told, "The plaster would be removed four weeks later and they will do an MRI to know exactly how much damage has been done. If there's any problem in the ligament, it would take nearly a year for me to recover. It would be impossible for me to shoot in a competition after such a long gap."

Shoeb, with stitches on his forehead and marks of beating on the back, could hardly rest due to pain.

Shoeb's father, shocked and quiet, was trying to console him. And just asked how this was possible in a "civilised country".

MSC-Abahani

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whites in the final.

"Yes, we have played defensive in the previous games but a final is a different thing, especially when you are up against a team like Abahani.

They look like the team to beat but we have a long history and not a single Abahani-Mohammedan match have had been one-sided in the past," said the former Bangladesh international.

Abahani coach Mahbub Harun also gave Mohammedan full marks for reaching the final topping big-budgeted teams like Usha and Mariners.

"They proved that they are one of the best teams by reaching the final. We are confident but it would be a tough match because they have a very tidy defence," said ex midfield general Harun who retired from the sky-blues before taking charge.

Abahani -- featuring their attacking trio Jimmy, Shuva and Sumon -- will have an edge though, due to their superior goal scoring ability, having scored 20 goals compared to their rivals' just nine. Mohammedan will mostly rely on quick counter attacks from the middle and the form of striker Prince.

Losing semifinalists Usha and Mariners meet in the third-place play-off at the same venue at 1pm.

Bravery put to test



AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa go to the Champions Trophy in India as the world's second-ranked one-day international team, determined to play the "brave cricket" pledged by coach Mickey Arthur.

The "brave cricket" mantra was given expression when South Africa made a then-world record 438 for nine to chase down a seemingly insurmountable Australian total at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg in March.

Arthur and captain Graeme Smith have identified the middle of an innings, typically from the 21st to the 40th overs, as an opportunity to up their strike rate with both bat and ball.

They are the overs after the end of fielding restrictions in which teams have generally settled for cautious accumulation, keeping wickets in hand for a late innings assault.

As part of the new South African philosophy, the reliable Ashwell Prince was jettisoned, barely a year

after being identified as the middle-order anchorman who fed the strike to bigger hitters.

Instead, South Africa will field a succession of flamboyant stroke-players, such as Herschelle Gibbs, AB de Villiers, Mark Boucher and Shaun Pollock, with instructions to keep the score moving.

If there is an anchorman it will be Jacques Kallis, whose place in the batting order might fluctuate according to circumstances.

Trying to push up the scoring rate in the middle overs is seen by Arthur as being especially relevant in India, where the combination of slow pitches, reverse swing and soft, scuffed balls make quick scoring in the last ten overs difficult.

The problem for South Africa is that while they may be able to field an exciting batting team and they have some good fielders, their bowling is weak.

They had to make a world record total at the Wanderers because their bowlers leaked 434 runs for only four wickets to the Australians.

In their only series with the record-breaking game, South Africa comfortably defeated Zimbabwe during September but were able to bowl out their weak neighbours only once in three matches.

Although Shaun Pollock remains

an accurate and economical bowler in one-day cricket, he has lost some of his pace and wicket-taking ability.

Makhaya Ntini, the only genuine strike bowler in the squad, has seldom been at his best on the slow pitches of Asia and the attack as a whole is largely one-dimensional, consisting mainly of right-arm fast and medium-pace bowlers.

Robin Peterson, a left-arm spinner, is the only specialist slow bowler and he is not renowned as a wicket-taker.

South Africa's build-up to the season was hit by their withdrawal because of security concerns from a triangular tournament in Sri Lanka which also featured India.

Plans to play in Abu Dhabi fell through and the Proteas had to be content with the undemanding series against Zimbabwe.

Matches against two franchise teams were arranged after the Zimbabwe series in which the national team beat the Johannesburg-based Lions but suffered an embarrassing defeat against the Titans in Centurion.

Federer fights to win



AFP, Tokyo

World number one Roger Federer found himself in a unexpected dogfight against qualifier Viktor Troicki before coming out on top in two tie-breaks to keep his Japan Open hopes alive Wednesday.

The 25-year-old Swiss, playing his first match since winning the US Open, needed time to get used to the surface here before scoring a 7-6, 7-6 win over the 276th-ranked Serbian.

Federer said he could not read Troicki's serve well as he saw a total of nine aces flash by.

"It comes from different angles. Maybe I should have taken more advantage on his second serve, but it's my first match of the tournament and I wanted to play safe, too," said the top seeded Swiss who had a bye in the first round.

"It was tough today (Tuesday). It was a tough match. I'm very happy

to come through. In the end it was a pretty good match."

Federer took a 2-0 lead at the start, but Troicki soon squared it with a break in the third, signalling a fight was on the cards.

The Swiss star though dug deep to come through when it mattered in the tie-breakers, showing his experience at the Serbian's expense.

"I've never seen him play. It always takes time to figure a player out. He came up with good shots, hardly hit any unforced errors and he served well, so that made it hard for myself to really get a grip on the match," said Federer.

"And I have ability to play well when it matters and that got me through. I was very impressed how he played. I think he's got a very good future."

It earned him a third round crack at defending champion Wesley Moodie of South Africa, who defeated Stefan Koubek of Austria 6-3, 6-4.

But Britain's rising star Andy Murray, the only player to have beaten Federer before the finals this

season, crashed out of the tournament to 2004 champion Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic.

"I was three matches away from playing against him (Federer) and in these tournaments you can't expect to get to the semifinals every week. It's difficult," said Murray after his 6-3, 7-6 loss in 72 minutes.

"Roger Federer or those at his level only can do it, so I wasn't looking far ahead," added the 19-year-old, who defeated Federer at Cincinnati in August.

Second seed Tommy Robredo of Spain joined Novak and Federer in the third round, beating Lu Yen-hsun of Taiwan 6-4, 6-1. Moodie out-classed Stefan Koubek of Austria 6-3, 6-4.

Rainer Schuettler of Germany, the winner here in 2003, upset 16th seed Paul Goldstein of the United States 6-3, 6-2, and Juan Monaco downed fellow Argentine Edgardo Massa 7-6, 6-3.



PHOTO: AFP

World number one Swiss Roger Federer makes a backhand return against Viktor Troicki of Serbia and Montenegro during their second round match at the Japan Open in Tokyo on yesterday.

Perfect practice

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took the opportunities in the match," said the Sri Lankan-born Australian.

Another good news for the team was the fitness of its new-ball bowlers Mashrafe Bin Mortuza and Syed Rassel who looked to be ready for the tournament proper. The two bowlers, who suffered freakish injuries during the month-long training, set aside all inhibitions about their physical condition as they completed their respective spells.

Left-arm paceman Rassel, who was cleared in the last moment to accompany the team, caused the early damage for the home team. He bowled brilliantly to end his 10-over spell with three for 38 that restricted the PCA XI, which was a mixture of Ranji and under-19 players, to 205 all out in 49.1 overs after the home side decided to bat first.

Mashrafe was slightly on the generous side but third seamer Forhad Reza used the conditions brilliantly to take three wickets for 32 runs in 9.1 overs. Left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak and Mohammad Rafique claimed two wickets each.

Uday Kaul was the top scorer for the home team with 47 runs as the Tigers fielded quite sluggishly throughout the innings.

bowlers Gagandeep Singh and Amanpreet Singh in reply to a modest total.

Ashrafal (6) once again failed as an opener although he was the unfortunate victim of an lbw decision with the ball clearly going down the legside. Nafees played on to the stumps after scoring 29 runs off 49 balls.

"Ashrafal was unfortunate today as he looked well set to play a good innings," said Whatmore who was concerned over the fielding effort.

The ace batsman opened in the final one-day international against Kenya in Nairobi last August. "There is no scope to be excited about the fielding effort," he commented in reply to a question of local journalist.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the practice match between Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) President's XI and Bangladesh in Chandigarh on Wednesday.

PCA PRESIDENT'S XI

Sohal c Mashud b Rassel	36
Ravinder b Rassel	3
Ricky b Rassel	4
Dharmani lbw b Reza	6
Gupta lbw b Razzak	6
Sumit c Mashud b Rafique	28
Kaul st Mashud b Rafique	47
Bipul b Razzak	0
Uniyal c Mashud b Reza	34
Gagandeep not out	12
Amanpreet c Ashrafal b Reza	3
Extras: (lb-13, w-12, nb-1)	26

Total: (All out in 49.1 overs) 205
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-10, 3-57, 4-57, 5-75, 6-121, 7-122, 8-179, 9-191, 10-205.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mortuza	9	1	48	0
Rasel	10	1	38	3
Reza	9.1	0	32	3
Razzak	10	2	27	2
Rafique	10	0	38	2
Hasan	1	0	9	0

BANGLADESH

Nafees b Uniyal	29			
Ashrafal lbw b Uniyal	6			
Aftab lbw b Bipul	76			
Hasan not out	66			
Bashar not out	16			
Extras: (lb-5, w-10)	15			
Total: (For 3 wickets in 41 overs)	208			
Did not bat: Mashud, Mortuza, Mehrab, Reza, Rafique, Razzak, Rasel.				
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-66, 3-186.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gagandeep 7	1	30	0	
Amanpreet 6	0	27	0	
Uniyal 8	0	34	2	
Rajesh 8	0	46	0	
Bipul 10	0	49	1	
Sumit 2	0	17	0	