

Tigers doing well

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

After a break for the Eidul Azha and New Year, the national cricketers returned to business with an extensive fitness session at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Due to the Premier Cricket League, scheduled to start tomorrow, there will be no residential camp for the coming Zimbabwe tour where the Tigers will play four one-day internationals against their southern African opponents.

The Tigers will participate in fitness sessions in between the Premiership matches before their departure for Harare on January 31 but the recent political turmoil has made everything uncertain, a fact

that has upset the cricketers.

"Nothing could have been better than playing more league matches before going to Zimbabwe but everything looks uncertain due to the political crisis. I don't think fatigue would be an issue in the World Cup because it's always a better option to play matches," said captain Habibul Bashar yesterday.

Coach Dav Whatmore led the proceedings along with his coaching staff where 17 players out of 24 took part in different indoor and outdoor tests.

Left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, pacemen Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza, Shahadat Hossain and Tapash Baisya and wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim were absent due

to flu while dashing batsman Aftab Ahmed failed to reach in the capital from Chittagong because of the countrywide blockade. Another

Chittagonian Nafis Iqbal was the other player not joining training as he has a recurrent knee injury.

Injured Sakib Al Hasan joined the camp but his conditions will only be cleared after the physio Paul Close's discussion with the local doctors. The young national all-rounder received an injury in his right hand while fielding for Mohammedan during their Premiership Twenty20 match against Brothers Union.

Sakib, however, was confident to get into action the Premier League although he has yet to take the bat in hand since the injury.

The focus of the Tigers, however, would be beyond the Zimbabwe tour as the World Cup is knocking at the doors.

"It's hard to look into one with

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BANGLADESH-ZIMBABWE SERIES

First ODI on Feb 4

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday revealed the official tour itinerary of the Tigers' tour of Zimbabwe.

Habibul Bashar's men are expected to leave Dhaka for the southern African nation on January 31 to play all four one-day internationals at the Harare Sports Club ground.

Bangladesh will get just two days' preparation after reaching the Zimbabwean capital on February 1 for the first one-day on February 4. The following matches are scheduled for February 6, 9 and 10 respectively.

The Tigers, who leave Harare on February 11, will be only one week at home before going to World Cup in the West Indies,

ITINERARY

Bangladesh's tour of Zimbabwe

February 4: First ODI at Harare.

February 6: Second ODI at Harare.

February 9: Third ODI at Harare.

February 10: Fourth ODI at Harare.

England A team's tour of Bangladesh

February 17-19: 3-day warm-up match at BKSP.

February 22-25: First 4-day at Mirpur.

March 1-4: Second 4-day at Bogra.

March 7: First one-day at Bogra.

March 10: second one-day at Mirpur.

March 12: Third one-day at Mirpur.

which will start on March 13.

The BCB also disclosed the schedule of England A team's tour of Bangladesh in February.

The second string English side will arrive in Dhaka on February 14 to play two Tests (four-day) and three limited-overs matches against their Bangladesh counterparts.

England A will launch their campaign with a 3-day warm-up match at BKSP starting from February 17 and then the first four-day game will start from February 22 at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

They travel to Bogra for the second four-dayer from March 1. The first one-dayer of the three-match series is scheduled for March 7.

The last two one-day matches will be played at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on March 10 and 12.



Bangladesh vice-captain Shahriar Nafees (R) gives a sprint as skipper Habibul Bashar (2nd L) and the rest watch during a fitness test at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Did U Know?

Tom Graveney of England and Australia's Barry Jarman captained their respective sides in just one Test and never led again.



Greg Chappell

(India cricket coach)

"He's done what he was chosen to do, which is to get in there and get runs. His performance on Friday in difficult circumstances, having to be rushed in at the last minute, was exceptional. He's done a good job." On Sourav Ganguly after losing the third and final Test against South Africa.

What to WATCH

ESPN

Australia v England
Twenty20 International
Live at 2:30 pm
Football Focus
Live at 6:00 pm

India Premier Hockey League
Maratha Warriors v Hyderabad Sultans
Live at 7:00 pm
Sportscenter India
Live at 9:30 pm

STAR Sports

Sri Lanka v New Zealand
Fifth ODI
Live at 7:00 pm

'Just a bit of fun' Australia-England Twenty20 today

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds says Tuesday's Twenty20 International against crushed Ashes rivals England will not have any bearing on the following one-day tri-series.

Fans have embraced Twenty20 cricket and there are Twenty20 World Championships next September, but Symonds says the sold-out Sydney Cricket Ground game is "a bit of fun".

"You still do have that element of pride at the end of the day but it doesn't have that complete sense of seriousness about it," Symonds told reporters Monday.

"If you win, you win, but we won't be taking it into the first one-day international saying -- 'We rolled England in a Twenty20 game'."

Symonds, while conceding England would be desperate for a win after the historic 5-0 Ashes whitewash last Friday, said he did not think the side, now captained again by Michael Vaughan, should get carried away by the match.

"They're probably in a different place to us at the moment -- we're pretty high on life and they're very disappointed in what they've achieved I'd say," he said.

"But a game like this is a bit of fun and you don't want to be stringing yourself up with your bootlaces if they were to get flogged again Sunday night."

"That's not what the idea of the exercise is."

Symonds said he expected plenty of banter between the two sides and said the light-hearted match would be a perfect return after the Ashes celebrations.

"It should be a bit of fun and both teams will probably have a bit of fun with each other and the crowd and all that sort of thing," he said.

Australia's pace attack will include Ashes 12th man Mitchell Johnson and Tasmanian youngster Ben Hilfenhaus, who were called into the squad for the resting Glenn McGrath and Stuart Clark.

Johnson said he was looking forward to taking an active role in the national side after a five-game Ashes stint as 12th man.

"It can be (a nightmare) and you have to have a bit of luck," he said.

"You can bowl your best ball and

still get hit for six but I think you've got to deal with it."

"You have to mix your line and length and pace otherwise you will get punished."

"But it will be good fun. I've been sitting around and watching the guys, and while it has been very exciting for me, it will be nice to get out there and play."

Test opener Matthew Hayden will have his first international tilt in the Twenty20 format since the 2005 tour of England while Cameron White, Brad Hogg and Nathan Bracken come in after missing the Ashes.

SQUAD

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Mike Hussey, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Cameron White, Brad Hogg, Nathan Bracken, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee, Ben Hilfenhaus.

ENGLAND (from): Michael Vaughan (captain), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Jamie Dalrymple, Andrew Flintoff, Ed Joyce, John Lewis, Sajid Mahmood, Paul Nixon, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Chris Read, Andrew Strauss, Chris Tremlett.



PHOTO: INTERNET

PERFECT PRACTICE: Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds tees off with a cricket bat at the Moore Park Driving Range in Sydney yesterday ahead of their Twenty20 International against England today.

Mohammedan stay in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club finally decided to make their base in Dhaka in the inaugural Professional Football League.

The popular outfit from the capital had thought of choosing Sylhet as their home ground but they have decided in yesterday's meeting that the Bangabandhu National Stadium would suite their purpose more.

Although they failed the January 6 deadline, additional general secretary Mostaqur Rahman last night told that they have informed the tournament committee of their decision.

The club had been divided upon the issue but Mostaq told that they chose BNS because it would be better to serve their purpose.

He added that they had to consider the hazards of travelling to and fro Sylhet regarding this matter.

Like Mohammedan, Rahmatganj also backed out of the plan to make Narshingdi their home ground. The only Dhaka-based club now to make their home out of the capital are Farashganj, who have picked hill town Rangamati.

JFA Cup from February 1

SPORTS REPORTER

The qualifying rounds of the third edition of JFA Cup under-15 football tournament will kick off on February 1 at eight venues across the country.

The first stage will be played in knockout basis.

The eight group winners will play in the finals to be held in Dhaka.

So far, 49 teams have confirmed their entries. All the footballers must be below 15 years on January 1, 2007.

Warne hints at academy

CRICINFO, undated

Shane Warne has spoken of his desire to help England and hinted at the possibility of starting a Shane Warne Cricket Academy for British children.

"I don't know how it may work or how feasible it would be," Warne wrote in his column at The Times. "Whatever I do, I want to do it properly."

Warne reacted favourably to comments made by Duncan Fletcher last week, when the England coach didn't rule out

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Oldham coming in May

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

After months of speculation, Oldham Athletic's tour of Bangladesh has been confirmed.

The English Second Division (Coca-Cola League 1) side, currently second in the table, will tour Bangladesh in May to play three matches in Dhaka and Sylhet.

Nicknamed Latics, the century-old club from Greater Manchester, Lancashire will face the Bangladesh national team in one of their friendlies during the May 7-13 trip as official guests of the Bangladesh Football Federation.

The players and coaches of Latics will also be involved in promotional work with local players. It is likely that a number of Bangladeshi youngsters would be selected to visit the UK for further intensive training at a future date.

Club officials consider the tour as a groundbreaking one which will build multicultural relationships between youth in Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi expatriates living in Oldham.

"This is a fabulous opportunity for us to spearhead a football

campaign in Bangladesh. This year will see the formation of the first professional Football League in the country and I am pleased that the BFF has chosen Oldham Athletic to help build relations between our two countries. We are looking forward to the trip and building long term relationship," told club Chief Executive Alan Hardy at a press conference while officially announcing the tour.

The BFF has appointed ABA, a marketing promotions and sports consultants based in the UK, to organise all travel and accommodation requirements and they have already been approached by companies in UK and abroad.

"Already, the interest shown by business wanting to be involved in this unique tour has been encouraging. A number of companies have approached us regarding sponsorship and I am sure that more companies based in both Bangladesh and UK will be interested in having some involvement," told Brian O'Hehir, development consultant with ABA Marketing.

Oldham, who held Championship (First Division) side Wolves in their FA Cup third round match on Sunday to set a replay,

were part of the inaugural Premiership season in 1992-93 and avoided relegation after winning a 4-3 thriller against Southampton in the last game. Eventually, the club whose home is Boundary Park -- within close vicinity of Old Trafford and Manchester City's new stadium City of Manchester -- were relegated in 1994-95.

Formerly known as Pine Villa FC, they started their journey as Oldham Athletic in 1899 and joined the Football League in 1907-08.

Oldham have never won a major trophy, but reached the League Cup final in 1990 (losing 1-0 to Nottingham Forest), finished league runners-up in 1915, and were FA Cup semifinalists in 1913 (losing to Aston Villa), 1990 and 1994 (losing both times to eventual winners Manchester United).

Despite surrounded by top clubs like Manchester United, Manchester City, Rochdale, Bury, Stockport County, Bolton Wanderers and Huddersfield Town, the Latics have no clear rivals.

Dislike for United is common amongst fans, partly related to their FA Cup losses in the 90s.

Ganguly awaits ODI recall

Cricket

PTI, Kolkata

Having made a strong comeback into the Test side on the tour of South Africa, former Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly is expecting a recall to the one-day squad.

"I expect to be selected in the one-day side now," Ganguly said upon his arrival from South Africa where he emerged as the highest run-getter for India with 214 runs from three Tests.

The left-hander has not played an ODI for the last 16 months, his last game being an outing against New Zealand in September 2005.

Ganguly, whose unbeaten knock of 51 at Johannesburg laid the foundation for India's victory in the first Test, said the team lost a great opportunity to win the series against South Africa.

"It was a huge opportunity to win a series against South Africa at their home by winning the last Test, but unfortunately it could not happen," Ganguly said.

India lost the series 1-2 after taking a lead by winning the first Test.

write off a player like Tendulkar whom he considered a genius.

"Don't forget that Sachin has got 70 international hundreds to his credit, nobody has such a record in the world. The decline in form is part of the game, it happens to every cricketer. He is a genius."

Ad