

Giants look to stretch winning run

SPORTS REPORTER

The third-round of the Kai-Altech Premier Division Cricket League begins today in the city at different venues.

Defending champions Old DOHS take on Indira Road Krira Chakra at BKSP while title aspirants Abahani meet newcomers Young Pegasus at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium in a bid to maintain their all-win run.

The other match between Partex Sporting Club and Kalabagan Krira Chakra will take place at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

The remaining third round matches -- Sonargaon v City Club (Fatullah), Victoria v Brothers Union (BKSP) and Mohammedan v Biman (Mirpur) -- will be held tomorrow.

Sourav ready to play anywhere

PTI, Kolkata

Having staged a memorable comeback into the Indian team, former captain Sourav Ganguly says he is ready to renew his famous opening partnership with Sachin Tendulkar

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Did U Know?

Shane Bond of New Zealand took 4 for 61 including a hatrick in the one-day international against Australia at Bellerie Oval on January 14. It was the eighth time that he has taken four wickets or more in a match, and third against Australia.



John Terry

(Chelsea captain)

"Jose Mourinho is the best in the business, there's no doubt about that, and I'm sure he will be for the next 20 years. That's what we want at Chelsea the best and only the best. So there is no way we want the best boss around to be walking away."

While urging the team's coach to stay.



ESPN

Commonwealth Bank Series

New Zealand v England

Third ODI

Live at 5:00 am

Sportscenter India

Live at 9:30 pm

FA Cup

Man City v Sheffield Wednesday

Live at 1:30 am (Wednesday)

STAR Sports

Australian Open

Men's/Women's First Rd

Live at 6:00 am



PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik (2nd L) speaks to his charges during an early morning training session at Ramna Park in the city on Monday.

Ponting given rest



AFP, Melbourne

In a bid to manage his workload ahead of the World Cup, Australian captain Ricky Ponting will be rested when the host nation takes on England in Brisbane on Friday in their triangular series one-day international.

With two wins from as many matches, after comfortable victories over both England and New Zealand, the Australians are at unbackable odds to reach the finals of the series.

With that in mind, the Australian selection panel announced here Monday that Ponting would miss Friday's game, with wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist to take over the captaincy and Mike Hussey's incredible rise continuing with his promotion to vice-captain.

Ponting's omission also opened the door for an unexpected recall for forgotten Victorian batsman Brad Hodge.

Hodge, who hasn't played for Australia for almost a year, is likely to slot into the middle order in Ponting's absence, in a timely opportunity ahead of the upcoming World Cup.

Australian chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said Ponting had been playing continuously since late September and would benefit from a rest.

"We feel that Ricky Ponting needs and deserves a break," he

said.

"He has played every match for Australia in all forms of the game since the DLF Finals in Malaysia in September, and we think this is the right time for him to allow his body to rest ahead of the World Cup.

"We've taken this approach to managing workload in previous years with success."

Hodge, who made a double century against South Africa last summer but lost his Test spot soon after, has played just five one-day internationals and has the modest average of 15.80.

His last limited-overs appearance for Australia was against Sri Lanka last January, and he



RICKY PONTING

seemed to have fallen out of favour with the selectors.

However, Hilditch said he fully deserved his recall.

"Brad Hodge is a logical replacement for Ricky in this squad

of 14," Hilditch said.

"He has been in exceptional form for Victoria this summer."

Hodge was grateful for the chance to revive his international career.

"Sometimes in cricket and especially representing Australia it might be the one chance that you get ... it's such a great side," he said.

"This is a window of opportunity for me."

"I've just got one game and one little opportunity and hopefully I can perform well and make an impression like I always try to do, and then maybe you never know about selection further down the track."

Having made an impressive international debut against New Zealand in Hobart on Sunday, pace bowler Ben Hilfenhaus has been retained in the 14 man-squad for the Brisbane game.

Veteran paceman Glenn McGrath is expected to play after missing the Hobart game with groin soreness, while Brett Lee is close to returning after the bout of bronchitis that caused him to miss the first two triangular series matches.

In good news for New Zealand, young batsman Ross Taylor has been declared fit to face England in Tuesday's tri-series match, despite suffering camp during his sparkling 84 against Australia in Hobart.

The Kiwis are hoping to capitalise on the fragile mindset of their beleaguered opponents and extend England's two-month losing streak on Australian soil.

Ali Asif's appointment raises questions

SPORTS REPORTER

If the job of a cricket team's operations manager has got something to do with the press apart from his other duties, then the recent appointment of Ali Asif Khan for the fifth day of the first Test at Centurion Park Monday.

Amla (64 not out) and Kallis (60 not out) put on an unbeaten 119 for the fourth wicket as South Africa made light of what coach Mickey Arthur had expected to be a difficult task on a wearing pitch.

Leg-spinner Danish Kaneria, who had been expected to be Pakistan's dangerman, gained

some sharp turn at times but was unable to take a wicket in 24.5 overs which cost him 61 runs.

Amla was beaten twice in the first over of the day by Kaneria but played the spin bowler with increasing confidence as he built his innings.

Nightwatchman Paul Harris was the only batsman to be dismissed Monday, caught at cover off Mohammad Asif for seven.

Play started 45 minutes late because of a wet outfield caused by overnight rain.

South Africa, who resumed at 69 for two, lost Harris in the sixth over of the day when he drove Asif uplissly and Faisal Iqbal held an easy catch.

Mohammedan want to ride the wave



SPORTS REPORTER

The introduction of the Professional Football League will bring changes to the club structure and the future of the game. And Mohammedan Sporting Club will look forward to make most of the new wave to solve the existing crisis.

Unlike Abahani and Muktijo-dha -- the strongest teams on paper -- and even Brothers Union, who have seemingly repaired the damage after the previous twos' heavy marketing at the transfer scene, Mohammedan have been left with mediocrity.

"Yes, we are being rated among the mid-table clubs like Sheikh Russell, Arambagh and Farashganj. It's true that we could not hold on to our players or bring any big names. But that certainly does not mean we would finish fifth or sixth," said Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik, who faces the challenge of taking one of the

most popular clubs of the country into the professional era with a bunch of unknown players.

"We lost Nazrul, Alfaz, Munna, Biplab and lastly Arman Aziz, who shaped our championship last season," told the celebrated coach who took over Mohammedan towards the end of the previous season and guided them to win the National League title.

"The other clubs had secured services of these players in 2005 even before the National League was over. We had disciplinary problems with Hassan and Manju and the club decided to let them go to avoid criticism. Now we have no stars but I am hopeful that the upcoming footballers we have will give the club longer service.

"The clubs make stars and six or seven players from my team will end up wearing national shirts by the end of this year," Manik's voice boasted confidence. "This will help the club in the long run, which is also one of the main targets of the Pro League.

"This year, I am not sure we can do great. But we are going for the

championship. We have a big fan base which will be a plus point.

The former national fullback, who led Muktijoddha to a number of titles, feels that he is having a different type of experience with the black and whites. Manik is used to have big names wherever he goes but handling a number of young players is a challenge for him.

"The difference is that my players are technically not that sound. But the tactics belongs to a coach and I hope to use the talent and the speed of youth. Mohammedan are such a team that any player who comes here gets bigger. The experience my team lack would be covered by foreigners."

He informed that the local heavyweights will recruit at least six foreigners to maintain the balance throughout the league so that he does not miss any crucial player due to suspension.

"The foreigners will play a big role and if I get their support, we will be a contender and who knows, with a little luck, we could deliver

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Proteas win easily



AFP, Centurion

Hashim Amla and Jacques Kallis took South Africa to a comfortable seven-wicket win over Pakistan on the fifth day of the first Test at Centurion Park Monday.

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Kallis, South Africa's most experienced batsman, started cautiously before batting with confidence and taking over as the senior partner, while man-of-the-match Amla played a sound supporting role in making his second half-century of the match.

The pair added 119 off 227 balls and were seldom trouble, especially in scoring the 77 runs they still needed after lunch.

South Africa set up the win when they took a 104-run first innings lead despite batting second, with a century by Ashwell Prince and half-centuries by Amla and Herschelle Gibbs making the bulk of the runs.

Pakistan are likely to be strengthened for the second Test, which starts in Port Elizabeth Friday, with the arrival of leading batsman Mohammad Yousuf and the likely inclusion of fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the first Test between South Africa and Pakistan at Centurion Park on Monday:

PAKISTAN: First innings 313

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 417

PAKISTAN: Second innings 302

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings

(overnight 69-2)

Smith lbw b Hafeez 32

De Villiers c Younis Khan b Asif 12

Amla not out 64

Harris c Iqbal b Asif 7

Kallis not out 60

Extras: (b-8, lb-4, nb-12) 24

Total: (For 3 wks in 60.5 overs) 199

Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-67, 3-80

Bowler O M R W

Asif 14 2 56 2

Navedul 7 3 21 0

Nazir 3 1 13 0

Kaneria 24.5 5 61 0

Hafeez 12 2 36 1

Result: South Africa won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Hashim Amla.

Umpires: S Bucknor and B Doctrove (both WIS).

TV umpire: K Hunter (RSA).

Match referee: C Broad (ENG).



PHOTO: AFP

South Africa batsman Jacques Kallis sweeps one down to fine-leg on way to his unbeaten 60 as wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal looks on during the fifth and final day of the first Test at Centurion Park on Monday.

Who's taking KP's place?



REUTERS, Sydney

England are still undecided about who will replace injured batsman Kevin Pietersen at number four in Tuesday's tri-series one-day international against New Zealand in Hobart.

Irish-born middle-order batsman Ed Joyce is the most likely replacement but England coach Duncan Fletcher is also considering promoting Andrew Flintoff up the order.

"We've discussed it and we're still discussing it," Fletcher told reporters on Monday.

"I've been chatting to (England captain) Michael Vaughan about it and we'll make a final decision about it tonight, who bats where."

Pietersen was ruled out of the rest of the tournament when he broke a rib batting in England's eight-wicket loss to Australia on

Friday.

Pietersen was England's best batsman in the Ashes Test series and his loss is a major blow to their chances of making the finals in the triangular competition.

"You don't find players like (Pietersen) every day, it'll be a huge loss," Fletcher said.

"You just hope that it gives an

opportunity to a young guy, Joyce probably, and he learns to play the role that we require of him."

"(The other batsman) must not be drawn into trying to emulate Pietersen. That's why I say it's quite a big loss because he can change a game pretty quickly."

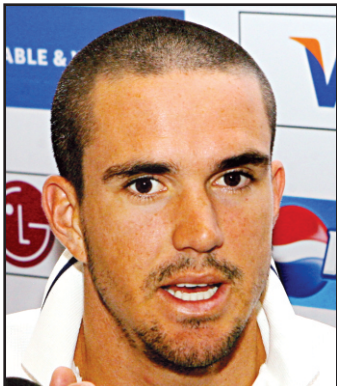
New Zealand have won their last three one-day matches against England and Fletcher said it was crucial they turned it around on Tuesday to restore their confidence after failing to chalk up a single win on tour so far.

"We've got to go in there and win this and build some sort of momentum," Fletcher said.

"We need to give (the players) the confidence they require. It's a huge game for us."

"New Zealand's one-day cricket's very good, they've got some experienced players and a very good captain."

"It's going to be a difficult game but I believe we can go in there and beat them."



KEVIN PIETERSEN

Gibbs in hot water



CRICINFO/AFP, Centurion

Herschelle Gibbs, the South African batsman, who has been charged under Level 3.3 of the International Cricket Council's (ICC) code of conduct for making abusive comments about a section of the crowd, will face a hearing conducted by the match referee Chris Broad later Monday.

He will also appear before a Cricket South Africa (CSA) disciplinary committee on Tuesday.

However, an official complaint by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will not affect a South African disciplinary hearing into the remarks by Gibbs which were heard by television viewers during the fourth day of the first Test against Pakistan Sunday.

CSA announced Monday that Gibbs would have to appear before the body's disciplinary commissioner on Tuesday.

Meanwhile the PCB has lodged a formal complaint with match referee Chris Broad.

CSA media spokesman Gordon Templeton said: "They are two separate matters. We are aware of the PCB's complaint but the CSA hearing is in terms of our own code of conduct and policies."

Templeton said he was "not privy" to the precise nature of the Pakistani complaint.

Gibbs was summoned to the CSA hearing after he was identified as the player who referred to Pakistan supporters as behaving "like bloody animals" in remarks which were picked up a stump microphone.

South African newspapers claimed Monday that the remarks

Ex-refs to inspect B. League venues

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has appointed three former referees to inspect the venues to be used during the B. League -- the inaugural Professional Football League.

Monirul Islam, member-secretary of BFF's referees' committee, Sheikh Badaruddin and Rafiqul Islam will inspect the grounds facilities and submit their reports to the federation by January 19.

The venues are: Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, Khulna Stadium, Sylhet Stadium and Rangamati Stadium.

also included references to ".... baboons" and suggestion that the spectators should ".... off back to Pakistan".

CSA chief executive Gerald Majola said in a statement: "CSA has investigated the matter and we have heard the remarks made by Herschelle Gibbs in response to verbal abuse directed by a number of Pakistan supporters at Paul Harris while he was fielding on the boundary."

"Herschelle says these remarks were for the ears only of his teammates in his proximity, and were directed in general terms at that section of the crowd that had verbally abused Paul Harris. He has apologised if he has caused offence to anyone."

Majola said the action was taken in terms of CSA regulations which stemmed from the International Cricket Council's anti-racism policy.

It was reported from Pakistan that Saleem Alfaz, the PCB director of cricket, had confirmed that a complaint had been made. Alfaz said both the Pakistan and South African boards had copies of tapes of the remarks.

The ICC code prohibits using "...any language or gestures that offends, insults, humiliates, intimidates, threatens, disparages or vilifies another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin".

If found guilty of a Level 3 offence, Gibbs faces a ban of between two and four Test matches or between four and eight one-day internationals.

South African coach Mickey Arthur added he was not happy about the stump microphones.

Ad