

Gazi belongs to Russel

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra officially announced Wajed Gazi as their coach for the B. League – the inaugural Professional Football – League which kicks off in mid-February.

Veteran coach Gazi was in double minds as his former club Brothers Union wanted him to stay after he had committed to Russel.

The Brothers management hoped that the two clubs would be able to reach an understanding and keep him at Gopibagh. But Gazi, who reportedly received advance payment from Russel for the treatment of his ailing son, finally showed his loyalty to Russel.

Gazi and his assistant coach Zahidur Rahman Milon, a former goalkeeper, both signed their agreements with Russel yesterday.

As a backup Brothers had already talked with former Indian national coach Syed Nayemuddin, who also was at the helm of the Oranges three years back. It is expected that the Premier League winners of the last two seasons will now focus fully on bringing Nayemuddin.

Mauresmo

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wildcard Monique Adamczak 6-2, 6-1 to set up an all-Russian clash with Maria Kirilenko.

Third seed Kuznetsova pulled out of the Sydney International last week with respiratory problems and could be heard repeatedly coughing during her match here but said she was feeling better.

"I think it sounds worse than I feel. Last week I was really feeling horrible, but this week I feel better every day," said the 21-year-old from St. Petersburg.

Elsewhere in the women's draw, Serbian eleventh seed Jelena Jankovic beat Spaniard Virginia Ruano Pascual 6-2, 6-2 and France's Tatiana Golovin, seeded 20, crushed Czech Zuzana Ondraskova 6-2, 6-0.

Ganguly says

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Ganguly said he would like to regain his opening slot in batting order but would go with whatever the team decides.

"It is for the team management to decide but if you see my record, I have played almost 250 matches as an opener. If they (team management) were to ask me I would like to open but as I said I am ready to play at any position for the country," he told 'Aaj Tak' in an interview.

When asked about the loss in South Africa, Ganguly said, "we should have drawn the series at least but we lost it, but every member of the team is responsible for the same (for the defeat). It is not the captain or the coach alone."

Inzy calls

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line decisions. Why can't it be applied to other dismissals as well," Inzamam said in a television interview after the defeat.

Pakistan were at the rough end of some poor umpiring decisions, but Inzamam did not blame it for the defeat.

"The ICC Code of Conduct does not allow me to say anything on this. But everyone saw what happened," he said.

Inzamam urged the ICC to allow the umpires to seek the assistance of modern technology while reaching at a conclusion on doubtful decisions.

"Modern technology can be used by umpires to rule on any close decisions including caught behind or leg before ones," he added.

The ICC experimented with the option of allowing batting teams to appeal against any disputed decision to the third umpire last year in one tournament, but soon afterwards dropped the idea.

Inzamam said that his team would comeback strongly in the series, strengthened with the return of in-form batsman Mohammad Yousuf and fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Umar Gul in the second Test starting on January 19.

All the three players missed the first Test while all-rounders Abdul Razzaq and Shoaib Malik missed the series due to fitness problems.

Serena drops

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way, whether she's sad or she's happy she's kind of just like mono-tone sometimes.

"When she gets on the court, sometimes she gets really pumped and it's really exciting to watch. I just think it's amazing, those players that can just stay positive – it messes with your mind."

Williams is attempting to come back after injury and a lengthy court case restricted her to just four tournaments in 2006, meaning she entered the Australian Open unseeded and ranked 81 in the world.

Despite questions about her physical conditioning, she said she hoped to contest 12 or 13 tournaments this year and remained hungry for more Grand Slam success.

"I want it all," she said.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF COACH WAJED GAZI

Coach Wajed Gazi and his deputy Zahidur Rahman Milon (sitting L and R) signing for Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra for the 2007 Professional Football League at the club tent yesterday.

Win relieves press

Cricket

AFP, London

A sense of relief was palpable in the British press after England finally won its first match during its ongoing tour of Australia, a one-day triumph over New Zealand, leading one newspaper here on Wednesday to call it the "headline you thought you'd never see".

That was how The Sun tabloid, Britain's best-selling newspaper, titled its article describing the jittery affair in Hobart on Tuesday that saw England beat the Kiwis' modest total of 205, thereby securing their first victory since landing in Australia in early November.

The three-wicket win with just a ball to spare followed a disastrous Test series for England, who arrived in Australia as holders of the Ashes for the first time in 20 years, only to lose all five matches in the series, the first whitewash since 1920-21.

"England's win ... over New Zealand on the island of Tasmania yesterday (Tuesday) sent a surge of relief through the dressing room," the tabloid's match report read.

"A win is a win and the spectre of going through the entire tour without putting a W in the result column has

been removed."

The victory, led by Andrew Flintoff's 72 not out, was tempered in the press, however, by the news that captain Michael Vaughan strained his left hamstring in his second game back from a long absence after knee surgery.

"Break open the bubbly, England have won a game of cricket Down Under!" the Daily Mirror's match report said, under the headline, "Good News...Bad News".

"But England's obvious joy was spoilt when the very same ice used to chill the champagne was being applied to Michael Vaughan's strained left hamstring."

As the paper also noted, "When England set off from Heathrow (London's main airport) on November 3 they could not have imagined how long it would take to get there, but 72 days into their journey the dust in the win column can finally be blown away and a mark chalked up."

The Guardian largely echoed those sentiments, writing: "England had arrived in Australia on bonfire night as proud holders of the Ashes and since then there had been a bonfire of the vanities, a veritable conflagration, with Flintoff, as a beleaguered stand-in captain, one of those most badly stung."

The Daily Express, meanwhile,

wrote that the path to the win was unimportant: "Yes, England's first victory of a winter of torment Down Under was a nervous and scrappy affair."

"Yes, they almost threw it away chasing a low total. But they did. They stumbled over the line. They won."

"And that was all that mattered to a team that were in danger of becoming a music-hall joke. One precious word – victory."

With 17 balls to go, a win seemed a formality, but New Zealand clawed their way back, leaving England needing four off the last over and tail-end batsman Jon Lewis on strike against part-time seamer Craig McMillan.

Lewis scored a single from the second ball of the over, before Flintoff collected two off the next delivery and then hit the winning runs with a straight drive from the penultimate ball of the match.

Following the win, British bookmaker William Hill cut England's odds of winning the triangular series from 16/1 to 13/2.

But Hills had world champions Australia 1/8 favourites to take the tournament and 4/7 to win all four of their group matches against England.

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Bracewell said.

"Obviously he has a history of back issues which we're trying to work him through, so it is a concern."

Bond took a hattrick in his team's 105-run loss to Australia on Sunday, joining Danny Morrison as the only New Zealanders to achieve the feat in one-day internationals, but failed to capture a single wicket in the match against England.

Bond's injury is not the only concern for Bracewell whose batsmen are badly out of form after losing their last three matches to Sri Lanka, Australia then England.

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Bracewell said.

"I can't quite put my finger on it, and it's not just a matter of confidence. Form is a fickle thing, each guy will have a different issue."

"At some point we have to start performing, because confidence and rhythm is an important part of going into the World Cup."

The World Cup will take place from March 13-April 28.

Murali, Vaas given rest

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka have rested senior bowlers Muttiah Muralidaran and Chaminda Vaas for a four-match ODI series against India in February.

The selectors offered the pair, the most successful bowlers in Sri Lanka's one-day international history, an opportunity to rest because both have niggle injuries.

Sri Lanka have recalled left-arm fast bowler Nuwan Zoysa, leg-spinning all-rounder Upul Chandana, middle-order batsman Russel Arnold and medium pace bowler Nuwan Kulasekera to a 15-man squad for the series.

Batsman Chamara Kapugedera has been axed axing the New Zealand tour but will remain on standby in case one of the eight specialists batsmen gets injured.

Team bowlers Ruchira Perera and Akalanka Ganegama were also dropped after the drawn series with the Kiwis.

The India series, Sri Lanka's last before the World Cup, starts in Poona on February 8 and finishes at Visakhapatnam on February 17.

SQUAD

Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Marvan Atapattu, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Silva, Russel Arnold, Upul Chandana, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Dilhara Fernando, Malinga Bandara, Nuwan Zoysa, Nuwan Kulasekera.

Bond hurts

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coach John Bracewell was hoping the latest problem would be just muscle soreness.

"Shane doesn't know and he wants to know, that's why we've got to get it checked out rather than second guess," Bracewell told the New Zealand Press Association on Wednesday.

"I'm always concerned when one of my players gets injured, and he is a key performer for us."

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Calderon says

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Berlusconi so that he will renew Kaka's contract and Berlusconi pressured him to sign."

Calderon added: "If I am still president in June it is very likely that Kaka will be joining us."

Perez issued a denial of the accusations, saying he had been forced to break his recent silence because of the "magnitude of Calderon's lie".

"It is totally false that I spoke to Silvio Berlusconi about Kaka or any other player," the construction magnate said in a statement. "The whole suggestion is rather infantile."

The club's fans did not escape Calderon's ire with the Real chief saying that the Bernabeu faithful were too hard to please.

"It's a stadium where people go as if they were going to the theatre. The people don't support the team, not like in Italy and England."

Real issued a statement on their Web site www.realmadrid.com saying they were surprised and disappointed that Calderon's comments had been recorded and played on national radio.

"The president was only trying to help students understand the importance of management in a business as big as that of Real Madrid," the club said.

"I came in as a late replacement down the order when we were in a lot of trouble and managed to get a hundred, so that's when it all started," Hussey said. "I was just trying to bat and it was one of those days when everything fell into place. I didn't try to do anything different."

With the score 5-66, Hussey

Gibbs to play 2nd Test

Appeal sets up ICC inquiry

Cricket

AFP, Johannesburg

Gibbs's ban was unjustified and only 22 percent thought it was fair.

The SA Cricketers' Association has leant its full support to Gibbs.

Chief executive Tony Irish said: "It is not appropriate for us to deal publicly at this stage with the merits of the appeal before the ICC."

"However I can confirm that we are now awaiting the written statement from the match referee and the appointment of an Appeals Commissioner as provided for in the ICC Code of Conduct."

Meanwhile conflicting reports of the incidents which led to Gibbs's remarks have been published in South African newspapers.

The three spectators who were moved from seats near the boundary after allegedly swearing at bowler Paul Harris claim that Harris swore at them.

But other spectators say the Pakistani supporters were abusive and made watching the game difficult.

A Cricket South Africa hearing into Gibbs's conduct has been postponed pending the outcome of his appeal to the ICC.

unpleasant for people sitting near them.

Gibbs's father, meanwhile, has accused the ICC of looking away when South African players were victims of racist remarks in Australia last year.

"There are a bunch of incorrigible old men in the ICC," Herman Gibbs senior told the South African SuperSport website.

"They were unable to do anything about match fixing and are too afraid to tackle any controversial matter properly."

Herman Gibbs said his son was not in the slightest bit racist despite the finding by match referee Chris Broad that his comments overheard on television were "racially offensive".

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Proteas expect backlash

Cricket

AFP, Port Elizabeth

latest ICC Test rankings, together with Mohammad Asif and leg-spinner Danish Kaneria.

The inability to sustain pressure on the South African batting when Asif and Kaneria were not in action in Centurion was a major factor in South Africa taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

South Africa are likely to field an unchanged team, with fast bowler Dale Steyn still struggling with a thigh strain.

There has been discussion, however, about the possibility of rotating the South African fast men to give Makhaya Ntini and Shaun Pollock a break before the World Cup in the West Indies in March.