

School boys on rampage!

SPORTS REPORTER

Happy Times International School authority yesterday complained that coach and players of BCSIR School, their oppositions of Saturday's match in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket Tournament, had assaulted their cricketers.

During the match, the BCSIR boys used abusive language but Happy Times continued the game at request of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials, according to a press release issued by the Happy Times.

After the match, Happy Times captain, who went to inform of this incident to the rival coach, was attacked by an opposition player which followed a mass assault. Allegedly, the BCSIR students used bats and wickets as weapons.

The unruly boys did not even spare other students and Happy Times coach when they tried to rescue their captain.

Happy Times coach Shamsur Rahman Jeki later filed a general diary at the Mohammadpur Thana.

Although BCB's school cricket project administrator Abu Imam Kawser ensured that he would take necessary steps to look into the incident, the board has yet to take any actions in more than 24 hours.

Five cruise to JFA Cup finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka, Khulna, Kishoreganj, Chuadanga and BKSP yesterday booked final round places in the 3rd JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship as zonal champions.

Tournament's prolific scorer Raju slotted his second hattrick of the qualifiers as Dhaka thrashed hosts Shariatpur 4-1 in yesterday's final to emerge Shariatpur zone winners.

Four-goal Mithun, who scored his first three goals inside five minutes, inspired another host district Khulna to a massive 7-0 defeat of Bagerhat but Kishoreganj's victory was hard-fought at Mymensingh, where they edged Jamalpur 1-0 with a third minute goal by striker Sayeed.

BKSP won comfortably, blanking Tangail 4-0 at Manikganj with Mamun netting twice while second half strikes by Suruj and Khalid enabled Chuadanga to dump hosts Narail out of the competition with a 2-0 victory.

Meanwhile, Comilla moved into the zonal final when the hosts blanked Habiganj 3-0 with Shakil scoring all three goals. The winners will meet Chittagong in tomorrow's zonal final.

Sirajganj also made the final pairing beating Chapainawabganj 2-1 in the tiebreakers after a goalless draw in their home ground. The Naogaon-Sirajganj final is slated for today.

Natore host Gaibandha in the other zonal final today.

Fashionista

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We have to give the guy a moment to get back to his best," said Dunga.

The coach added that 17-year-old Alexandre Pato, already seen as Brazil's great new hope for the future even though he has played only four games for Internacional, did not figure in his immediate plans.

"We have to wait a while," said Dunga. "He has played four games in his career and he hasn't completed any of them."

"He has fantastic talent but we can't rush these things along."

Title up

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to Barcelona in one of the earlier Champions League group stage games ultimately cost the Germans the chance to fight for the continent's most prestigious trophy.

Holders Sevilla face a tricky tie against Steaua Bucharest while upwardly mobile Newcastle have one of the easier tasks left in the competition, that of attempting to overcome Belgians Zulte-Waregem.

Ukraine champions Shakhtar Donetsk are concerned ahead of the visit of Nancy as they are still in their close season break.

"We have not played any official matches since our last Champions League match on December 5," moaned Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu.

Football takes

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behind his mother, a brother and a sister. He was buried at his hometown after Johr prayers yesterday.

A minute's silence was observed before yesterday's matches at different venues to show honour to the youngster.

The Bangladesh Football Federation officials consoled the death of Omar and expressed their deep sympathy for the bereaved family. The officials also visited the family members last night.



Sri Lankan cricketers (L-R) Farveez Mahroof, Mahela Jayawardane and Malinga Bandara bat in the nets during a training session in Goa on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Danish surprised, relieved

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Danish Kaneria was surprised and relieved after being included in Pakistan's 15-man World Cup squad but ultimately confident that he could repay the late faith selectors have invested in him.

Kaneria, who last played an ODI for Pakistan against a major opponent in December 2005, was Pakistan's only real shock selection for the squad. "I am very relieved to be honest and very happy," he told Cricinfo. "It is every-one's dream to play the World Cup and I was desperate to be involved. I will only celebrate though if I can help bring back the trophy from the West Indies."

Kaneria's position in the ODI side has been vociferously debated in Pakistan. Ex-players such as Abdul Qadir, Imran Khan and Rashid Latif have backed his inclusion in the ODI side repeatedly. The arguments

have apparently fallen on deaf ears though, as under Inzamamul Haq and Bob Woolmer, Kaneria has managed only seven of his 16 ODIs and hasn't been part of ODI squads in England, the Champions Trophy and series against West Indies and now South Africa.

Inzamam only recently came round to thinking of Kaneria as an option, when during the injury-ravaged tour to South Africa, he admitted to a Pakistan TV channel, that Kaneria was in his mix now.

"I was a little surprised by it I guess," Kaneria admitted. "But I have always maintained the hope that I would be selected sooner or later. I said after coming back from South Africa that I was disappointed but was also determined to get back in the side."

Having never been a regular part of Pakistan's ODI teams, questions are likely to be asked about how well he can adjust to the demands of a format he has so little experience of. But Kaneria, natu-

rally, remains confident.

"Tests and ODIs are a different ball game and involve different roles at various stages of the game. But I have experience of limited overs cricket with Essex and Karachi in domestic cricket. I did pretty well in the Twenty20 at home recently as well. Leggies have been successful in this format, especially for Pakistan, in the past and ultimately I will play whatever role the captain asks me to."

What has no doubt helped is the work he has put in with his batting and fielding, two skills many thought had held him back. The team management has acknowledged recently that Kaneria's fielding, though still not up to the mark, is nevertheless vastly improved.

"I have worked very hard on my fielding and batting recently but generally I have been working hard on them anyway. Now that I am in the squad, I want to continue to do that."

Protest worth it?

Cricket

AFP, Paris

Henry Olunga began his international cricket career as a raw 18-year-old fast bowler, the youngest and the first black man to represent Zimbabwe.

It ended less than eight years later with him fleeing for his life, exiled from his home and condemned as a traitor.

Four years on from Olunga and teammate Andy Flower's widely-praised World Cup decision to risk all they'd worked for by donning black armbands to make their now famous "death of democracy" denunciation of Robert Mugabe, was it all worth it?

The plight of Zimbabwe in general, and the country's struggling cricket team in particular, will come into sharp focus once again in the Caribbean in four weeks' time when the 2007 World Cup gets underway.

The Zimbabwe team which finished the 2003 event has endured trauma on and off the field in the years since.

They have been stripped of Test status, torn apart by strikes, boycotts and pay disputes, been routinely whipped into defeat and such has been the violence of the implosion that not one player from the 2003 team has survived to reach the Caribbean.

Despite the dramas, Olunga, has no regrets.

"Andy Flower approached me a few months before the start of the World Cup and touted the idea of a

protest," recalled the 30-year-old Olunga.

"There was a thought of boycotting the World Cup but that was too drastic because we didn't want to derail the campaign. It meant so much to so many people."

"So to wear black armbands was the most dignified way."

The backlash from the Mugabe regime was immediate.

"It became very uncomfortable to stay in the country," added Olunga.

"There had been many political opponents who had been imprisoned or had become victims of violence if they didn't toe the line. It was suggested that something very unpleasant would happen to me if I stayed," he told the BBC recently.

Olunga was able to make his escape to England once his team's involvement in the 2003 World Cup had come to end with a tame defeat to Kenya in the South African city of Bloemfontein.

Reports suggested that Zimbabwe secret agents had arrived at the ground with the intention of snatching Olunga and spiriting him back across the border to face the wrath of Mugabe.

Olunga now lives peacefully in England, establishing a music career but still active in the game featuring in charity and club games.

Flower also played the last of his 213 one day internationals at the World Cup and like Olunga it was in South Africa in a defeat in East London to Sri Lanka before he too made his escape to England.

Since then, the 38-year-old has

kept playing for Essex and South Australia.

Four years on, Flower is still depressed over what's happened to his country.

"The stance that Henry Olunga and I took was against human rights abuses and the lack of democracy, to highlight that Zimbabwe was turning into a police state," said Flower.

"People were being raped, beaten and tortured. I don't like being called a rebel. Our protest had an impact when we did it, but in the practical sense, I don't think it has done anything."

In the West Indies, Zimbabwe's challenge is likely to be put down quickly and ruthlessly having been drawn in a first round group with former champions West Indies and Pakistan.

"I don't see a long-term future for Zimbabwe," says Flower.

"The domestic structure isn't strong enough to bring through the quality of players to do well on the international stage."

Olunga believes all is not lost, but that there are still plenty of dark days ahead.

"There's no inheritance for young people there, many have left, many have had their youth stolen from them," he says.

"Mugabe was a great showman. Many people thought he supported reconciliation but he showed his true colours with the land invasions."

"But I have a lot of hope for the country. Zimbabwe has great people - just bad leadership."

Pakistan keep Akhtar, Asif

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having fears of an ankle fracture," Altaf told AFP.

Pakistan have until March 2 to replace any injured player and after the deadline it will be up to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to allow any replacement.

Pakistan have also gambled on Danish Kaneria, the leg-spinner left out of the one-day series against South Africa which concludes on Wednesday.

"On the slow and low pitches of the West Indies every team has selected a spinner," said Altaf of Kaneria who despite fine Test performances has taken only 12 wickets in 16 one-dayers since his debut six years ago.

"We hope he delivers."

Inzamamul Haq, who will lead the side, will be playing in his World Cup after being part of Pakistan's only World Cup triumph in Australia in 1992.

Star batsman Mohammad Yousuf, all-rounders Shahid Afridi and Abdul Razzaq and paceman Shoaib Akhtar will be playing their third World Cup.

Vice-captain Younis Khan was part of the team in the 2003 event held in South Africa but the rest of the players will be featuring in their first World Cup.

The 26-year-old Afridi will not be available for Pakistan's first two matches after he was handed a four-match ban for pushing his bat at a

spectator in the South Africa series last week.

Pakistan are drawn with hosts the West Indies, Zimbabwe and debutants Ireland in Group D of the preliminary league. The top two teams will advance to the second round.

The World Cup will kick off with the match between Pakistan and the West Indies in Jamaica on March 13.

The Pakistan squad will depart for the West Indies on March 1 and will play two warm-up matches, against Canada on March 5 and against South Africa on March 9, both in Trinidad.

Tuffey surprise for NZ

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

The New Zealand cricket selectors on Tuesday remained loyal to the established members of their one-day cricket squad for the World Cup in the West Indies, despite a disappointing summer.

The dismal record of just six wins in their last 16 one-day internationals may have been enough to change the line-up, but the selectors resisted the chance to experiment when they named their 15-man World Cup squad.

The only surprise was the recall of opening bowler Daryl Tuffey, two years after he was sidelined with a torn shoulder tendon.

Although the slow nature of pitches expected in the West Indies could work against Tuffey, coach John Bracewell said his ability to take the ball away from right-handers made him the ideal replacement for the injured Kyle Mills.

When New Zealand failed to

make the finals of the recent tri-series with Australia and England in Australia, captain Stephen Fleming admitted the team was not performing well but said they were not despondent.

"We as performers let John (Bracewell) and selectors down and exposed ourselves to criticism that's deserving," Fleming said.

"But within the camp we are pretty comfortable with the direction we are heading."

Tuffey, who beat off Andre Adams and Chris Martin to replace Mills, has played 76 one-day international matches since his debut in 2000 and taken 90 wickets at an average of 29.92.

"I knew I was close but obviously I was closer than I thought," Tuffey

SQUAD

Stephen Fleming (captain), Shane Bond, James Franklin, Peter Fulton, Mark Gillespie, Michael Mason, Brendon McCullum, Craig McMillan, Jacob Oram, Jeetan Patel, Scott Styris, Ross Taylor, Daryl Tuffey, Daniel Vettori, Lou Vincent.

Minnows name squads

Cricket

AFP, Edinburgh

Scotland's cricket selectors have named an unchanged side for next month's Cricket World Cup in the Caribbean following a successful build-up in Kenya over the last few weeks.

The 15 players who originally set out on the five-week tour to Sharjah, Mombasa and Nairobi have been invited to travel to Barbados and St Kitts to take part in the one-day tournament.

"We went to Kenya with two aims, first to qualify for the Twenty20 World Championship and also to inflict a first defeat on the host country," said national team coach Peter Drinnen.

"We achieved both these objectives, and it is therefore no surprise that we are endorsing the entire squad for the World Cup itself."

Scotland open their campaign in St Kitts against Australia on March 14, then play South Africa on March 20 and the Netherlands four days later.

AFP adds from Nairobi: Kenya on Tuesday named the 15-man squad for the Cricket World Cup in the West Indies retaining the same side that won the World Cricket Division one title they hosted earlier this month.

Long-serving skipper Steve Tikolo retains his place with all-rounder Thomas Oduyo as his deputy, but the selection left out

three other experienced players, two of whom failed to beat the selection deadline and a third down with injury.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Kennedy Otieno and left-hander Hitesh Modi failed to make the deadline while opening bowler Martin Suji is still nursing a knee injury.

AFP adds from Hamilton: There were few surprises when Bermuda announced on Monday its 15-member squad to take part in the World Cup which is being staged in the Caribbean for the first time.

The Bermudians have retained all but one of the players that contested the ICC World Cricket League Division 1 competition earlier this month.

Batsman Oliver Pitcher, who missed the WCL because of injury, has been included ahead of Arthur Pitcher Jr.

Most of the players virtually picked themselves and have occupied spots in the team ever since the tiny island nation located in the Northern Atlantic Ocean gained a place in World Cup two years ago.

Irving Romaine will captain the side with wicketkeeper/batsman Dean Minors as his deputy.

There is also room in the squad for left-handed batsman David Hemp, Born in Bermuda, the 36-year-old Hemp is currently the captain of English county side, Glamorgan.

The squad also includes South Africa-born all-rounder Saleem Mukkuddem, and 17-year-old all-rounder Malachi Jones, whose

said, adding his selection was "a real surprise but really exciting."

New Zealand's batting stocks do appear to be brightening with the eye-catching return of Lou Vincent - replacing the retired Nathan Astle and passing 50 in three of four innings during the tri-series.

Jacob Oram returned to the squad from injury and unleashed some powerful hitting in Australia as did newcomer Ross Taylor, but there was never a game where all 11 fired at the same time.

With New Zealand heading into a home series against Australia in a final tune-up before the World Cup, Bracewell put the emphasis on consistency.

"We're turning up with two good skills and missing one per game," he said.

"We have to deliver all three facets (batting, bowling and fielding) in order to be challengers to Australia and contenders in the World Cup."

"We can do all three things very, very well. It's a matter of getting the consistency together."

selection will make him one of the youngest players to appear in the global event.

Bermuda are making their first appearance at the Cricket World Cup and will contest Group B of the championship in Trinidad, where they face Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh.

The Bermudians play warm-up matches against England and Zimbabwe in St. Vincent on March 5 and 8.

BERMUDA

Irving Romaine (captain), Dean Minors (vice-captain), Delyone Borden, Lionel Cann, David Hemp, Kevin Hurdle, Malachi Jones, Stefan Kelly, Dwayne Leverock, Saleem Mukkuddem, Stephen Outerbridge, Oliver Pitcher, Clay Smith, Janeiro Tucker, Kwame Tucker.

SCOTLAND

Craig Wright (captain), Ryan Watson (vice-captain), John Blain, Dougie Brown, Gavin Hamilton, Majid Haq, Paul Hoffmann, Douglas Lockhart, Ross Lyons, Neil McCallum, Dewald Nel, Navdeep Poonia, Glenn Rogers, Colin Smith, Fraser Watts.

KENYA

Steve Tikolo (captain), Thomas Oduyo (vice-captain), Ravindu Shah, Tanmay Mishra, Collins Obuya, Peter Ongondo, Nehemiah Odhiambo, Morris Ouma, Malhar Patel, Hiren Varaiya, David Obuya, Rajesh Bhudra, Jimmy Kamande, Tony Suji, Lameck Onyango.

Exit Mashud, enter

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But the fact is Javed and Rajin's performances in their last ten games were not anything exceptional to give them the nod. Javed has only one fifty and Rajin only century, against Kenya, in their last ten games.

When asked whether it was possible to pick two wicketkeepers when they had already given Mushfiqur Rahim a chance in the two Tests as a batsman where Mashud stood behind the stumps.

"India and Australia did it but it didn't suit with our combination," said Faruque adding that it was not relevant to comment on the issue whether their personal bitter relationship with Mashud played the vital role behind the harsh decision.

Faruque also explained their decision behind the inclusion of hard-hitting opener Tamim Iqbal.

"We believe that he has the ability to surprise any team in a given day and we thought that he could have been a good choice as a hard-hitting opener," he defended.

Although there was lot of debate on the very ordinary pace of Rasel, the chief selector said that they discussed the name of Forhad Reza and Mohammad

Sharif but brought back the left-arm pacer to bring verity in the pace attack.

"Yes, his pace is a concern but he has the ability to seaming the ball. Actually we wanted to bring a verity in the pace attack," he said.

The board has also retained controversial Ali Asif Khan as manager for the World Cup.

Iftikhar likely

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Newlands last weekend, in which they achieved victory with 36 overs to spare. "They have some very dangerous match-winners and some amazing talent. If they click as a unit, they will be very difficult to beat," Pollock cautioned. "But the results will look after themselves if we make sure we are on top of our game, we know our game plan and we use it to put pressure on them."

"The team is looking good, well-balanced, and everybody knows their roles. We have the talent and ability to do well, whether we need to chase 430 or bowl sides out cheaply. We just have to make sure the right South African team turns up on the day."

all-rounder.

"Tushar has not got due chances in the side as well," he added.

Former national paceman Samiur Rahman also vented his frustration on the overall selection, particularly the snub of Mashud.

"He should have been picked even if he (Mashud) is injured. There is still a month left for the hand injury to heal, so I see no reason for not taking two wicketkeepers," said the burly fast bowler of the 1980s.

"If Rahim is rated as a good batsman, then keep him in the squad solely as a batter."

"I am surprised with Rajin and Javed being picked. We all know that both these players are more suited to the longer version of the game."

Ex-players stunned

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the lesser sides to improve his batting form," he explained.

"Javed cannot be considered in the one-day side if we want to win the match. I think Bashir should have taken a strong stand in favour of Mashud because it is not unlikely to see him exit the same way," he added.

Bangladesh's first Test captain Naimur Rahman was however not sure whether off-the-field affairs between Mashud and the selectors played any role behind the tough decision.

"It is an open secret that the understanding between Pilot (Mashud) and the selectors is not good. I don't find any single reason behind the exclusion of Pilot."

Actually what selectors did with the team selections for last one or two years was totally different with the World Cup team," said the former