



Action from the first-ever Rugby Club Cup match between Azad SC (yellow) and Arambagh at the Paltan Maidan yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Nayeem to make

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strengths. The past is past and all I want to do is concentrate on the current team.

"We have here a number of promising young players beside a lot of experienced guys. My job is to guide and motivate to become a fighting unit. I will work on their fitness first.

"Once in training, I'll know about the vacuums and decide on where we need foreign players," said Nayeem, who had the last laugh when he met the Bangladesh team in the SAFF soccer final in Karachi in December 2005.

Ironically, he will once again be pitted against the then Bangladesh coach Diego Cruciani -- who has taken over Abahani -- in the professional league.

"I think introducing professionalism is a worthy step. The first step is important because it takes a lot to just roll the ball.

"The main problem in the sub-continent is that we talk too much and work less. Football needs money and you cannot help the game rise without big finance. Footballers will work harder if they get enough money. We talk about Zidane, Ronaldo and Beckham now and again but have the organisers ever thought how much money we are paying our players compared to them," questioned the former Indian international before signing off after his first day's practice session at the club ground in Gopibagh.

Dhiman keeps

Farhad 1 batting, extras 3, 1-3).
CHITTAGONG FIRST INNINGS: 231 all out in 66.2 overs (Salahuddin 1, Mahbubul 2, Sunny 53, Nazimuddin 5, Ehsanul 1, Faisal 0, Dhiman 100 n.o., Sabbir 0, Waskuruni 42, Tareq 6, Kamrul 0, extras 21, Shafaq 3-45, Mushfiq 4-36, Farhad 2-23).

SYLHET: 170 and 142-5 in 58 overs (Rahman 2, Imtiaz 9, Rezaul 39, Alok 41, Saif 10, Mabud 22 batting, Maola 12 batting, extras 7, Salahuddin 2-20, Taniquz 3-47).
BARISAL FIRST INNINGS: 175 all out in 73.5 overs (Imran 14, Hannan 29, Rakibul 0, Mehdi 13, Shahin 21, Raisul 18, Iftekhar 0 25, Salahuddin 32 n.o., Arman 3, Tariqul 8, Sajidul 0, extras 12, Hasibul 2-44, Nazmul 2-13, Enamul 4-40, Nabil 2-28).

KHULNA FIRST INNINGS: 182 all out in 77.5 overs (Imrul 25, Sajjadul 5, Nahidul 56, Monirul 5, Manzarul 15, Asadullah 18, Salim 16, Muntasir 24 n.o., Mahmuduzzaman 2, Shiblu 4, Aslam 0, extras 12, Talha 3-55, Mahbubul 3-54, Arafat 2-42, Sharifullah 2-20).
DHAKA FIRST INNINGS: 145-3 in 61 overs (Uttam 43, Rashedul 8, Kamrul 17, Shamsur 44 batting, Anwar 26 batting, extras 7, Mahmuduzzaman 1-28, Aslam 1-24, Manzarul 1-14).

Totti not giving

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strength has grown and it's starting to pay off."

If Inter beat Cagliari the club will surpass the best winning sequences recorded in the Spanish and German leagues.

Spain's Real Madrid won 15 games on the trot in the 1960-61 season, while Germany's Bayern Munich equalled the feat in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 seasons.

In fact, Inter have not lost for 28 matches in all competitions with their last defeat coming back on September 27 when they lost 2-0 at home to Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

The odds point to another Inter win on Saturday, but Cagliari coach Franco Colomba remains optimistic about his improving team's chances.

WI keep Samuels

Cricket

AFP, Bridgetown

The West Indies have named Marlon Samuels in the 15-man squad for the World Cup they will host next month despite an ongoing probe of his links with an alleged bookmaker.

And selectors also sprung one surprise with the inclusion of Kieron Pollard, the 19-year-old Trinidad allrounder beating off more experienced names for the final place.

Much of the squad had been set in stone, but Pollard has kept out the likes of Darren Sammy and Runako Morton, while Rayad Emrit who played in the recent series against India didn't even make the reserve list.

Pollard, who made his debut in the 'West Indies' domestic first-class and limited-overs competitions this year, has captured the imagination of fans in the Caribbean with his big-hitting for his native Trinidad and Tobago.

"We've had a good look at Kieron Pollard over the last few matches in the Carib Series and the KFC Cup," said Gordon Greenidge, the former master batsman now the convener of the West Indies selectors.

"He impressed us all.

Throughout the Caribbean, a lot of praise has been heaped on this young man. Also being an unknown quantity -- he is not known to the outside world who will be coming to compete in this World Cup.

"From what we've seen, we feel that he will add value to the team. His contribution in regional tournaments so far has been very good."

Pollard first gave notice of his emerging status when he crashed 83 off 38 balls against Nevis to put Trinidad and Tobago into the final of the inaugural Stanford Twenty20 Cup in Antigua.

He distinguished himself with a century on his first-class debut against league champions Barbados in the opening match of the season, and followed up with another hundred against the Leeward Islands.

The rest of the squad was predictable, with Ramnaresh Sarwan, who recovered from a foot injury only to damage a thumb in a domestic match last week, also named in the squad and retaining the position of vice-captain to Brian Lara.

Lendl Simmons has taken the final batting slot while Ian Bradshaw, Daren Powell, Corey Collymore and Jerome Taylor are the four pacemen, leaving Fidel Edwards on the sidelines.

Samuels' inclusion in the squad came as no real shock despite being accused by Indian police of having passed on team information to a man suspected of being a bookie, Mukesh Kochar, during last month's one-day series in India.

But police said there was no evidence money had changed hands and it had only brought it to the notice of cricket authorities because it was a violation of the ICC's code of conduct, which bars players from dealing with bookmakers.

Samuels has admitted he has known Kochar for the past six years but did not believe he was a bookmaker. The Dubai-based Kochar told the Indian media he was not a bookie and that Samuels was like "a son" to him.

West Indies open the World Cup against Pakistan, in Jamaica, on March 13, with other pool games against Zimbabwe on March 19 and Ireland four days later.

SQUAD

Brian Lara (capt), Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Dwayne Smith, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Dwayne Bravo, Marlon Samuels, Ian Bradshaw, Corey Collymore, Jerome Taylor, Denesh Ramdin, Devon Smith, Lendl Simmons, Daren Powell, Kieron Pollard.

No Sachin for decider

AFP, Visakhapatnam

Star Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar has been rested for Saturday's series-deciding fourth and final one-day international against Sri Lanka due to a sore back.

"It's nothing to worry about. He has played a lot this season, so we have decided to give him some rest," chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar said.

The series is currently tied at 1-1, with one match abandoned due to rain.

Tendulkar, plagued with fitness problems in recent years, missed a home one-day series against England and then the West Indies tour last year because of a shoulder injury.

But the master batsman said the latest problem was not a great concern.

"It (the back) is just stiff. Nothing serious," said Tendulkar, the world's leading scorer in one-day internationals with 14,783 runs and a record 41 centuries in 381 matches.

Tendulkar has been playing regularly since returning to the squad last August and the hectic schedule seemed to have taken its toll.

The ace batsman, who suffered a back injury in 1999 during the home series against Pakistan, was reported to have had the same problem during the five-day final of the premier domestic tournament early this month.

But he showed no signs of it, scoring 105 and 48 against Bengal to help Mumbai win the Ranji Trophy.

Indian cricket board secretary Niranjan Shah said the team management had requested that Tendulkar be rested for the Visakhapatnam game.

"This was done after a check-up by team physio John Gloster," he said.

India are also concerned over the fitness of pacemen Irfan Pathan and Munaf Patel, and all-rounder Yuvraj Singh, who are all returning from recent injuries and are expected to play big roles in the World Cup, starting in the Caribbean next month.

The last

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leading many to believe that they would never go for a stop-gap solution again.

But the irony is that they again went one step behind by recalling the opener after ignoring him for last three series (two against Zimbabwe and one against Scotland) and the ICC Champions Trophy.

"Don't judge any player's ability only considering their performance against a team like Zimbabwe' was the other epitome but this was also not followed when the selectors rated Rahim's performance against Zimbabwe as a 'good enough' benchmark and push him through to the big challenge.

The question is not whether the young Bogra lad has the potential to represent the national team in such a high-ranking meet, rather whether the young man has gone through enough strenuous test in his nine-match one-day career.

The answer is definitely a 'no' because he played seven games against a run-down Zimbabwe (no need to portray their strength right at the moment) and two against Scotland.

So, one cannot say justice has been done in the selection of a World Cup team.

Many however believe that personal 'liking and disliking' sometimes play a significant role behind major decisions, which definitely should not be a principle for the men who are at the judges' position.

It is also evident in the appointment of the team operations manager. Believe it or not, some of the very high-ranking team-management members even advocated for the new manager, who replaced former national captain Khaled Mahmud, before the just concluded Zimbabwe trip.

"I can assure you he will be very successful in this post", was a verdict recovered from one of them.

But with all that's been said and done, the team have been selected and there is no going back. We can only hope that the chosen Tigers put on a show worthy of the World Cup and not come back home leaving the same questions unanswered.

Italy okays

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officer Filippo Raciti was killed outside Catania's stadium after home fans went on the rampage before, during and after the derby match against Palermo on February 2.

The ministry's sporting watchdog, meeting here Thursday, also allowed stadiums in Parma (Serie A) and Bari (Serie B) to reopen to the public after safety upgrades were undertaken.

Like AC Milan, stadiums in Bologna (Serie B) and Reggio Calabria, where Serie A outfit Reggina play, need further updates but season-holders can attend matches.

Inzy needs pace duo

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan dope-tested most of its World Cup cricket squad on Friday with the futures of key fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif hanging in the balance.

Thirteen of the 15-man squad plus five reserves were tested after flying back from South Africa, officials said.

Akhtar and Asif, who had doping bans controversially rescinded in December, will probably be tested on Saturday when they return from England.

Experts have warned that the pace duo, who face life bans if they test positive again, could still have illegal substances in their systems after being banned in November.

Pakistan are carrying out the tests apparently in response to criticism over the lifting of Akhtar and Asif's bans, which the World Anti-Doping Agency is challenging in the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Captain Inzamamul Haq said his team, beaten in both the Test and one-day series in South Africa, would struggle in the Caribbean if they lose the two bowlers.

"We need both Akhtar and Asif," Inzamam told reporters on team's arrival from South Africa.

"We definitely do not have replacements for Asif and Akhtar but I hope they would be there to play in the World Cup. It would be tough without them."

Akhtar and Asif have been included in the squad subject to clearing dope and fitness tests before the deadline of March 2, 11 days before the event starts.

Both tested positive for banned steroid nandrolone in October last year. A month later Akhtar was banned for two years and Asif for one year before their punishments were lifted on appeal.

Akhtar's contribution on the African tour lasted just one day when he took 4-36 in the Port Elizabeth Test, which Pakistan won.

The mercurial fast bowler returned home with a hamstring

injury and has since hurt his left knee, an injury which makes him doubtful for the World Cup.

Asif featured in all three Tests and took 19 wickets but has since suffered a recurrence of an elbow injury and struggled in the one-day series.

Inzamam said he hoped every player passes the dope tests, whose results are due on March 1.

"If we play at our full strength then we have a good chance and I hope every player clears the dope tests," said Inzamam, adding he hoped to improve on his performance in South Africa where he scored just 74 runs.

"I will lift my performance in the key event like the World Cup," he said.

The Pakistan squad will start a short training camp on February 20 ahead of next month's World Cup, where they are in Group D alongside the West Indies, Zimbabwe and Ireland.

Pakistan will open the tournament against hosts West Indies on March 13.

Bond buries Australia

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"It's the best I've seen him bowl for some time and not just because he got five wickets. His control was outstanding, and his thought processes were great."

After his first spell of six overs, Bond had two for seven, with Phil Jacques spooning a slower ball to Daniel Vettori and Brad Haddin bowled by a ball which pitched outside the off stump and cut back sharply.

When he came back for his second spell, Bond pulled off a magnificent caught-and-bowled which left batsman Cameron White staring in disbelief. Bond finished with 5-23.

White blasted a slower ball straight down the wicket only to see Bond lean to his right on his follow-through and snatch up the ball one-handed just above the ground.

Bond then cleaned up Nathan Bracken and Brad Hogg at the tail and added to his purple patch by catching Shane Watson at long-off after the Australian had skied spinner Daniel Vettori.

Vettori also dismissed Hodge to finish with two for 26, while Mark Gillespie (2-27) and Craig McMillan (1-3) were the other successful bowlers.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the opening match of the Chappell-Hadlee series between Australia and New Zealand in Wellington on Friday:

AUSTRALIA

Hayden c Fleming b Gillespie	14
Jacques c Vettori b Bond	1
Haddin b Bond	6
Hussey c Taylor b McMillan	42
Hodge c Fleming b Vettori	22
White c b Bond	13
Watson c Bond b Vettori	8
Hogg b Bond	20
Johnson c Oram b Gillespie	8
Bracken b Bond	0
McGrath not out	5
Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-5, nb-1)	9

Total: (All out in 49.3 overs) 148
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-16, 3-45, 4-86, 5-98, 6-108, 7-120, 8-133, 9-133, 10-148.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Tuffey	8	0	29	0
Bond	9.3	2	23	5
Oram	10	0	22	0
Gillespie	9	0	27	2
Vettori	9	1	26	2
Styris	2	0	15	0
McMillan	2	0	3	1

NEW ZEALAND
Vincent not out 73
Fleming not out 70
Extras: (lb-3, w-2, nb-1) 6
Total: (Forn losses in 27 overs) 149

Bowler	O	M	R	W
McGrath	6	1	23	0
Bracken	7	1	30	0
Johnson	8	0	49	0
Watson	4	0	28	0
Hogg	2	0	16	0

Result: New Zealand won by 10 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Shane Bond.

Toss: New Zealand

Fine start

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two wickets each.

Agrani's two-down batsman Ashiqui Islam struck a patient 54 but his fall sparked a collapse as Dhanmondi spinner Altaf Kamal took four wickets for 37.

In the other match on the opening day, promoted side BKSP held on to earn a seven-run victory over Azad Sporting Club. Batting first, BKSP only mustered 175 in 48.3 overs at the Dhaka University ground.

In reply, Azad were hauled by some tight bowling to be locked up at 168-9 in 50 overs with Mahmudul Hasan and left-armner Raihan Anas took two each for BKSP.

YOUR SAY ON TIGERS SELECTION

FROM PAGE 17
and others will establish themselves in the world stage by good performance.

Happy World Cup!
A Probashi Bangladeshi Cricket Loving Fan

4. Selectors of BCB should be sacked. Only fools can think of Bangladesh team without Khaled Mashud. He is our asset.

Mehedi

5. The exclusion of Khaled Mashud, is the biggest controversial issue

encircling the Bangladesh World Cup squad. Otherwise the team is well-balanced with a mixture of youth and experience. This is not for the first time such a controversy is with the World Cup team. Earlier in 1999 the exclusion of Minhazul Abedin was the issue. The later inclusion of Minhazul proved worthwhile. If India can include out of form Sehwaq and Australia, the injured Symonds, why is Mashud not included? It's true that Mushfiqur Rahim played some important knock in recent Zimbabwe tour, but experience

should have outweighed everything when it is the World Cup ahead. Khaled Mashud should be included as soon as possible along with Rahim who could be taken as an additional batsman. At least it is the last World Cup to play for Mashud! Who knows Mashud might do some miracle, making the nation proud.

Moinul Alam

6. Bangladesh always likes to cut off experienced man from its squad at the eve of tournament. They always put in quandary in announcing a team involving controversial decision that would not be acceptable to all. Once they made Ashraf and Rajin Saleh as a captain and Rajin lead the team in ICC tournament and result was known to all. Ashraf was also captain to tour India and same result happened this time around. Again we find same vein and I think. Faruque is waiting to burn! Can we gauge that Bashar will handed same feat! Why not? In 2003 World Cup Akram Khan was left off from the team just for his fielding and at last selector forced to send him to salvage their so-called best team in taking awful experience. We are unfortunate that our selectors never look behind and always avoid analysing historical aspect of past event.

If they realise, Mashud is not handul in batting, why they did not fit Mr. Bogra in one-day cricket from past one year? Is batting one indicator in selecting keeper? Standing behind wicket and take audacious catch is not prime responsibility for a keeper! Playing against all Test playing country and knowing almost all world class player and hints bowler to bowl respective weak areas with some valuable tips is not a indicator in selection process. How funny!

Shahidul Laskar

UEFA CUP RESULTS

AFP, Paris

Results from the UEFA Cup round of 32 first leg matches played on Thursday:

At Braga, Portugal
Sporting Braga (POR) 1 (Ze Carlos 81) Parma (ITA) 0

At Moscow
Spartak Moscow (RUS) 1 (Kalinichenko 65) Celta Vigo (ESP) 1 (Nunes 41)

At Bucharest
Steaua Bucurest (ROM) 0 Sevilla (ESP) 2 (Poulsen 41, Kanoute 76-pen)

At Gent, Belgium
Zulte-Waregem (BEL) 1 (D'Haene 69) Newcastle (ENG) 3 (Dindieulx 47-og, Martins 59-pen, Sibirski 76)

At Lens, France
Lens (FRA) 3 (Jemaa 50, 71, Dindane 90-pen) Panathinaikos (GRE) 1 (Salpingidis 65)