

Faruq win enables qualification

SPORTS REPORTER

Omar Faruq's win in the first match of the day was enough for Bangladesh to reach the qualifying stages of the Junior Davis Cup in the pre-qualifying competition at the Ramna Sports Complex yesterday.

Youngster Omar beat Felix Wee Han 6-1, 7-5 in the opening match of the day after rain delayed the start.

Mufazzal Hossain was beaten in the second match by Abdul Hakim Bin Hakimuddin 6-0, 6-1 but the earlier win was enough to take the hosts through.

Pakistan and Singapore joined Bangladesh in the next stage, while in the Federation Cup pre-qualifiers, Sri Lanka and Singapore qualified.

WC victory vital for WI morale, says Lloyd

AFP, Bridgetown

West Indies cricket legend Clive Lloyd believes victory in the World Cup would be a crucial boost to morale in the Caribbean.

Lloyd led the West Indies to victory in the first two World Cups in 1975 and 1979 but the Windies have failed since to add a third title to their names.

"I think we can be a very formidable side. We are not too far off. This competition might give us the lift that is needed," Lloyd said on Thursday.

"It's the same thing that happened in 1975, we won the World Cup when Australia were supposed to be the winners of it and from that we moved further up the ladder.

"I know that these guys (West Indies), if they can understand what is waiting for them out there, can give the West Indies people something to really be proud of, which they can and I hope they can do that in this World Cup because I can see that is the lift that we need.

"It would be magnificent effort to do so (win the World Cup). People are calling other teams but they are still thinking that West Indies have a very good chance. It would give us that type of boost that is needed in the region," he told the West Indies official website.

England dark

FROM PAGE 17 well we can play against any team in the world and be very competitive.

"I just hope over the next six to eight weeks we can have a good campaign and come home with something special in our hands."

England face warm-up matches against Bermuda on Monday and the Australians four days later in St Vincent before launching their World Cup campaign against New Zealand on March 16 in St Lucia.

Since losing to England, Australia have also fallen to a 3-0 series defeat in New Zealand and been overtaken on top of the world rankings by South Africa.

They will also go into the tournament without injured striker bowler Brett Lee.

"Most teams are strong in areas and weak in others. Australia will be competitive and New Zealand will be very difficult to beat. I wouldn't like to say one team are the favourites," said Vaughan who has played only three of England's last 35 one-day internationals after his long-awaited comeback from knee surgery was curtailed by a hamstring injury.

He expects to have recovered in time to face New Zealand -- if not, Andrew Flintoff will captain England.

"Hopefully it won't come to that. The hamstring has got better and better," said Vaughan.

"I will play a part against Bermuda and more so against Australia. It is a gradual process."

MU face Anfield

FROM PAGE 20 feel that," said Ferdinand.

"Mentally it would be a massive advantage if we can get a win but we are not thinking about any team other than ourselves. If we can win it will be great, if we don't it's not the end of the world, but the three points are what we are looking for." Elsewhere, Arsenal badly need a good performance at home to Reading as they seek to get their season back on track after three straight defeats and the fallout from last weekend's League Cup final, which has resulted in Kolo Toure, Emmanuel Adebayor and Emmanuel Eboué all being banned.

At the bottom, Watford, who look doomed to relegation, could destroy Charlton's chances of beating the drop when the two sides meet at Vicarage Road.

After knocking four goals past fellow strugglers West Ham last weekend, Charlton are within six points of Wigan, the club currently occupying the last survival spot.

Wigan are away to Manchester City on Saturday, a match that might test the watching FIFA President Sepp Blatter's enthusiasm for English football, while West Ham entertain Spurs hoping to avoid a sixth consecutive defeat.



A budding pacer (R) delivers for the speedgun at the Rajshahi Stadium as part of the Grameenphone Pacer Hunt programme yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ten Doeschate carries slim Dutch hopes

AFP, The Hague



The slim hopes of any success the Netherlands team has at the World Cup lie firmly in the hands of talented South African all-rounder Ryan Neil ten Doeschate.

The 26-year-old former Western Province player is the only one of the 15-strong Dutch squad to play county cricket in England, in his case for Essex, and has been one of the leading batsmen outside Test cricket in the last year.

The English county discovered ten Doeschate during a pre-season tour to South Africa three years ago.

He has proved a useful acquisition given that his Dutch ancestry means he is qualified to play in England under the Kolpak ruling, which means he is not registered as an overseas player.

Goalless draw

FROM PAGE 17

Earlier, Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury declared the 11-team meet open following an unimaginative opening ceremony featuring march past of ex players and young kids in team jerseys followed by dance and songs repetitively used by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on all special occasions.

BFF president SA Sultan, general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal, other federation high-ups and an Asian Football Confederation delegation headed by its general secretary Paul Mony were also present.

The day's events were rounded off with a concert by famous singer Ayub Bachchu.

Red cards: Arman Aziz (Muktijodha) and Abul (Abahani)

Yellow cards: Parvez Babu, Kanchan (Muktijodha) and Pranotosh (Abahani)

TEAMS Muktijodha: Titumeer, Hassan Al Mamun, Rajani, Ghansah, Parvez Babu, Arman Aziz, Munna, Arman, Saiful (Kanchan), Moni and Alfaz (Enamul).

Abahani: Biplab, Siraji (Anwar), Nazrul, Pradeep, Waly, Abul, Joy, Pranotosh, Zahid Parvez, Ujjal (Abdullah Parvez) and Emilij Yusuf.

"Our team started badly but we recovered towards the end. The main problem we faced was the lack of stamina of my players," said Yusuf.

It's not cricket

FROM PAGE 17

South Africa needed 22 to win off 13 balls when their semifinal against England was interrupted by rain. When the game resumed, they found to their horror that the target had been revised to 21 off one ball.

The controversial rain-rule was later replaced with the Duckworth-Lewis system, but South Africa continued to be haunted by the weather.

It was a mathematical error that led to their early exit in 2003 at home. They had only tied the scores off the penultimate ball against Sri Lanka in a rain-hit tie. They thought they had completed the job.

"They cocked it up ... you can't be a total mathematical dunce," said Briton Frank Duckworth, who devised the system with fellow-statistician Tony Lewis.

By the end of 2006, ten Doeschate had played six one-day international games for the Netherlands, scoring two fifties and taking seven wickets.

That has been further bolstered in five more ODIs this year, an unbeaten knock of 109 not out against Bermuda this month boosting his current ODI batting average to 55.12. In that same game, he also snagged 3-27 to boost his wicket haul to 20 ODI wickets at 22.10.

With 21 Twenty20 games also under his belt, the Port Elizabeth-born all-rounder positively oozes experience of big game time in a team that is sorely lacking just that.

The Dutch task, however, is a tough one to say the least. They open their World Cup campaign with a Group A game against South Africa on March 16, followed by champions Australia on March 18 and finally Scotland four days later.

"Everything is in place and everything looks very good. We had a very good week in Antigua where things have started to fall into place and we are shaping up very well for the World Cup," he said.

"I will give the sign in the sky," he replied obligingly, though it was evident -- with his refusal to talk at all about playing Federer -- that he was more concerned in keeping his gunpowder dry.

His new-ball partner Graham Onions took two wickets when out-of-favour opener Mehrab Hossain (20) and Marshal Ayub offered catches to Tim Bresnan at second slip.

Skipper Tushar Imran (8) edged seamer Bresnan to reach at the safe hands of wicketkeeper Davies while Nadif Chowdhury being bowled also by the same bowler to continue his poor batting in the four-day Test series.

Mosharraf Hossain was the victim of a run out.

SCORES IN BRIEF BANGLADESH A: First innings 121-8 in 45 overs (Jahurul 8, Mehrab 20, Nasiruddin 12, Marshal 8, Tushar 19, Nadif 17, Mosharraf 1, Dollor 0, Sahagir 30 not out, Enamul 12 not out, extras 2; Broad 3-54, Onions 2-38, Bresnan 2-13).

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Sonn ICC chief until year 2009

CRICINFO, undated

Percy Sonn will continue as president of the International Cricket Council (ICC), extending his term at the helm to three years.

The announcement came at the end of a two-day board meeting of the ICC at Cape Town. This means that Sonn's term will come to an end in June 2009.

The normal term of a president is two years, with the possibility of a one-year extension, and like his predecessors Jajmohan Dalmiya, Ehsan Mani and Malcolm Speed, Sonn also opted to continue.

"I am delighted to accept the Board's invitation to remain as President for a third year. I have had a busy but immensely enjoyable first year in the role that has seen many plusses for our great game," said Sonn.

He was keen to point out the advances made by the ICC in the recent past.

"Chief among those have been the adoption of our new strategic plan and the WADA Code, a successful Champions Trophy in India and our new broadcasting agreement with ESPN STAR Sports which will play a major role in promoting cricket and safeguarding its future by offering all of our members financial certainty."

LOCAL SNIPPETS

Bashar pretty

FROM PAGE 17

flying off to Jamaica on the 9th for the World Cup's opening ceremony.

On arrival in Bridgetown Bashar told the Nation newspaper that after planning for several months he believed Bangladesh can topple their Group B opponents and make the second round of the tournament.

ACTIVE CHESS Former national player Mizanur Rahman and FIDE Master Khondokar Aminul Islam became joint champions in the active chess.

A total of 18 players took part in the competition.

PACER HUNT IN RAJSHAHI

Mobasshar Khan hit the highest speed of 76mph in the GrameenPhone pacer hunt at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

A total of 160 young aspirants participated in the programme.

BAF TENNIS Hosts BAF Base Bashar clinched the title of the Bangladesh Air Force inter-base lawn tennis competition that was concluded on Thursday.

They beat BAF Base Kurmitola 2-0.

PCB blasts

FROM PAGE 20 were still carrying traces of Nandrolone in their body, a fact that could have led to stringent bans had they tested positive during the World Cup in ICC-conducted tests. The PCB has rubbishish such speculation.

Ashraf asserted he did not want to get into a public slanging match over the issue but had been compelled to respond. "We have asked Percy Sonn (the ICC president) to instruct other ICC officials not to issue such inflammatory remarks. We do not want to engage in a public debate on this but since the remarks appeared in public, we are forced to state facts and clear the names of players, the PCB and Pakistan."

The chairman also reiterated the board's commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on doping, pointing out that Pakistan remains one of only four cricket countries that carries out internal dope tests.

The exchange of remarks is not likely to warm relations between the ICC and Pakistan, already a little cool after the Oval fiasco of last August and the doping scandal in October.

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ICC names WC officials

CRICINFO, undated



Four groups of officials, each comprising four umpires and two match referees, will oversee the group stages of the World Cup.

The 16-member panel of umpires, announced by the ICC on Friday, include Steve Bucknor, who will be appearing in his fifth World Cup, Simon Taufel, who has been the ICC's Umpire of the Year three times in a row, and Rudi Koertzen who is six short of David Shepherd's career record of umpiring 166 ODIs.

Apart from the umpires panel the ICC also announced a seven-member match referee panel for the entire tournament. Interestingly, except for Mike Proctor, who missed out due to his country's isolation years, the remaining six have all participated in the World Cup as a player. A notable exclusion from the list of match referees is Clive Lloyd, the former West Indies captain, who is currently the manager of the West Indies team. Lloyd has officiated in 133 ODIs as a match referee.

The umpires panel includes nine from the Elite Panel and the rest from the International Panel, and was decided by the ICC's Cricket Committee, chaired by Sunil Gavaskar, and Malcolm Speed, the ICC chief executive. The list of umpires for the later stages of the tournament will be announced in due course.

Shepherd's retirement in 2005 means that at least one umpire makes his first appearance in a World Cup final. Shepherd and Steve Bucknor stood in the last three finals -- in 1996, 1999 and 2003. Bucknor will read the officials' oath on behalf of all umpires and match referees at the opening ceremony at Trelawny Stadium in Jamaica on March 11.

Commenting on the selections, David Richardson, the ICC's general manager, said that good performances by those in the International Panel should give them a chance of officiating in the Super Eight's as well as a case for promotion to the Elite Panel. "The 16 people really are the 17th team in this year's tournament and they will work just as hard as the players to ensure they perform to the highest possible standards," he said.

England look to Freddie

AFP, London



Most cricket fans, especially when they are young, dream of hitting the world's best bowlers for huge sixes, taking wickets with searingly fast deliveries, holding sharp slip catches, captaining their country to improbable victory and still being thought of as one of the lads by team-mate and opponent alike.

Then they wake up. But Andrew Flintoff has come as close as anyone in recent times to living that dream and the Lancashire all-rounder's importance to England's World Cup bid cannot be under-estimated.

In an era where batsman increasingly lord it over bowlers in one-day internationals, Flintoff's record of 122 wickets in 115 matches at an average of 26.41 is especially impressive.

Much was made, and rightly, of Paul Collingwood's batting during England's recent 2-0 Tri-Series final victory over world champions Australia. But in the first final it was Flintoff's three for 41 in 9.3 overs that played a vital role in keeping Australia's score in check.

Now England supporters will hope that Flintoff, who has had his fair share of injuries, including most recently a left ankle problem, can stay fit.

Flintoff, nicknamed Freddie after the cartoon character Fred Flinstone by John Stanworth, one of his first coaches at Lancashire, has scored only three hundreds in limited overs internationals.

That can be explained in part by the fact that the 29-year-old often comes in at No 6 in the knowledge that, if he gets out, there is not much batting to come.

But a few quick fifties in the Caribbean could make all the difference. For example, his 72 not out off 75 balls was vital to England three-wicket victory in their Tri-Series match against New Zealand in Hobart in January.

"Freddie had an outstanding game," said Michael Vaughan.

"We have seen a guy that can win us games and that's great for us to have."

Indeed it is but it is also great for Flintoff to be England captain? With Vaughan injured, he led England during their 5-0 Ashes thrashing by Australia. At the time many wondered if, as happened to England all-round great Ian Botham, the captaincy was proving a needless additional burden to the side's star player.

And long after the Ashes, which Flintoff had done so much to wrest from Australia's grasp in 2005, were lost, England coach Duncan Fletcher said of his skipper: "I do believe there is a lot to ask of him, especially with a young, inexperienced side where you've got to do a lot of captaining."

But when Vaughan was injured soon after his return in the one-day series, the captaincy reverted to Flintoff.

Those close to him have often spoken of his good cricket brain and this was seen in the way he shrewdly used Monty Panesar to good effect and didn't panic when the left-arm spinner was hit to the boundary.

One good thing about Pietersen's upbringing is the absence of the often crippling difference which has gnawed away at so many English players.

If Pietersen, a man whose supreme self-belief is often labelled as arrogance, has ever doubted whether he was good enough to play international cricket he has kept it well-hidden.

In this he shares a trait with Tony Greig, England's flamboyant, South Africa-born, captain of the 1970s.

Such is his giant personality, it has been suggested that Pietersen is not a good team man -- an even greater insult within English cricket than labelling someone a poor player.

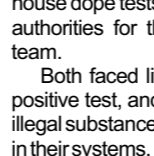
Australia coach John Buchanan was the latest to make that criticism and Pietersen replied in characteristic fashion.

"Australia love to have a go at individuals before series, during series and after series and I'm not really too interested. It does hurt when people say that because I'm a massive team player," said the player.

Pietersen, it seems, can sometimes be as hard to work-out off the field as he is for bowlers on it.

Allan hails Pak removals

AFP, Sydney



Former Australian cricket captain Allan Border on Friday welcomed Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif's withdrawal from the World Cup, saying the tournament could not afford any possible doping scandals.

The Pakistan pace duo were ruled out through injury, but have been under a cloud since being banned and then reinstated after failing doping tests last year.

Neither had taken compulsory in-house dope tests ordered by Pakistani authorities for the entire World Cup team.

Both faced life bans for a second positive test, and experts had warned illegal substances may still be lingering in their systems.

Border said it was better for Akhtar and Asif, who have been suffering from knee and hamstring, and elbow problems respectively, to miss the World Cup starting in Jamaica in little more than a week.

"Players who have been selected from other teams for what is cricket's biggest tournament are there performing to the best of their ability and on a level playing field," Border told The Australian newspaper.

"If it were to be true that it wasn't an injury, and it turned out to be something else, then it would be better for all concerned that they didn't make the trip."

"If it was revealed at some later stage they had taken an illegal substance, then the sport doesn't need another black eye."

"I would feel genuinely sorry for both the two young blokes if that were not the case."

Border, who captained Australia to a World Cup win in 1987, said he was prepared to give Akhtar and Asif the benefit of the doubt.

"There has been a cloud hanging over both of them for a good while," he said.