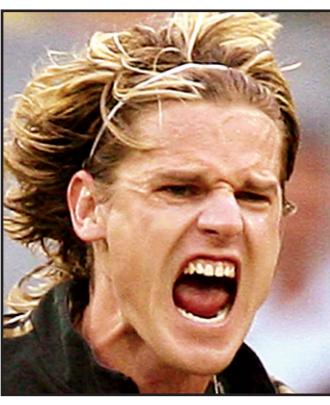




Did U Know?

For winning the Wimbledon, Billie Jean King received a 25-pound gift voucher. For winning Wimbledon Venus Williams received 300,000 pounds.



Nathan Bracken

"She tells me the same thing she always does, to back my ability, and it's the same thing Troy Cooley says to us every day."

On his mother-in-law who sounds like a good replacement should Australia ever need a new bowling coach.



National Cricket League
Day One
Chittagong v Rajshahi
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium
Dhaka v Khulna
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Mashud to tour Sri Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

National discard wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud has been picked in the 16-member Bangladesh A squad to tour Sri Lanka this month for a two-match Test (4-day) and three-match one-day series.

Young stumper Sahagir Hossain, who was called up for the second string side in the just concluded home series against England A after Mashud had requested the board to release him, was also rewarded for his impressive performance with a berth for the Colombo trip.

Lanky paceman Talha Jubaer is the only addition to the squad that played against England A while Junaid Siddique, Marshal Ayub, Mohammad Shahjada, Nasiruddin Faruque and Ziaur Rahman have been ignored.

Left-arm spinner Manzarul Islam Rana and seaming all-rounder Farhad Reza were also included but only to play the one-day series. They will join the team after completion of the four-dayers.

Bangladesh A will leave Dhaka on March 16 and launch their campaign with the first four-dayer from March 19. The second Test will begin on March 24.

The one-day matches are billed for March 31, April 2 and 4.

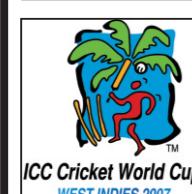
The selected cricketers have been told to report at the National Academy House in Dhanmondi on March 14 at 6pm.

SQUAD

Tushar Imran (captain), Khaled Mashud, Mehrab Hossain, Enamul Haque, Mohammed Sharif, Sahagir Hossain, Nazimuddin, Nadif Chowdhury, Nazmul Hossain, Talha Jubaer, Mosharraf Hossain, Jahirul Islam, Dollar Mahmud, Mahmudullah Riyad, Manzarul Islam Rana and Farhad Reza.

Bashar's warning to India, Sri Lanka

PTI, Montego Bay



Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar is quietly confident that his side would be more than a match for two of the formidable teams from the sub-continent, India and Sri Lanka, when group matches of the cricket World Cup unroll next week.

"In one-day cricket, anything can happen. So we want to take our chances. Let's see what happens," remarked Bashar.

Bangladesh have put the participating nations, more so India and Sri Lanka, in the tournament on alert after they beat New Zealand in a practice game earlier this week.

Bashar admits that both India and Sri Lanka, placed alongside them in Group B, are playing good cricket and would be difficult to beat. But, he hopes that his side will do everything to progress to the second round.

"They are playing very good

cricket, but we have played them often enough to know of their strengths and weaknesses. There is no discernible weakness though but we are quietly confident," he said.

Bashar feels there are quite a few things which are working to his team's advantage at the moment.

"We have some decent spinners

and as everyone feels the wickets here are going to be a help to them, I think we have an advantage in that area.

HABIBUL BASHAR

"We then have quite a few batsmen who have experience and promise and who are determined to do well," said Bashar, mentioning Shahriar Nafees, the solid opener who has had a wonderful time with the bat last year.

Bashar also acknowledged the advantage his side gained by turning in the Caribbean a bit earlier than other teams. "We came here early in order to prepare for a triangular series and it helped our preparations. We are now more used to conditions and pitches," he said.

Bangladesh, as it were, have always done well in the Caribbean. They nearly won a Test against the West Indies a few years ago and in a one-day series more recently, ran the hosts close.

Bangladesh, who recently beat New Zealand in a practice game, have the knack of upsetting strong teams. Their upset victories over Pakistan during the 1999 World Cup and later against Australia make them a force to be reckoned with in the showpiece event.

and rely on slow-bowling batsmen Gayle and Marlon Samuels as alternatives to the specialist quickies and back-up medium-pacers is a gamble.

Lara has left spinner Dave Mohammed as a reserve and he has to hope that the wickets are well suited to seam and that his pacemen deliver otherwise his attack risks being one-dimensional.

Form over the past two years suggests that the West Indies have the ability to beat anyone in the one-day game but are also quite capable of pressing the self-destruct button and slumping to embarrassing defeat.

After all, this is a team which was

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

The winners of the first two World Cups, West Indies are looking to become the first host team to win the competition

but to do so they will need to turn around over a decade of decline.

Unlike in 1975 and 1979, when they won the tournament with players of the calibre of Clive Lloyd, Vivian Richards and Michael Holding, the current West Indies side is short on established top class internationals with a proven record.

But with the ball, Lara has to hope that 22-year-old paceman Jerome Taylor and 23-year-old all-rounder Dwayne Bravo can turn their undoubted talent and much talked-of potential into consistent match-winning displays.

The decision not to pick an out-and-out spin-bowler in the squad

and rely on slow-bowling batsmen Gayle and Marlon Samuels as alternatives to the specialist quickies and back-up medium-pacers is a gamble.

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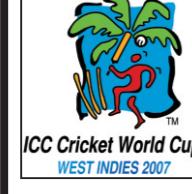


PHOTO: AFP

West Indies captain Brian Lara speaks next to the World Cup 2007 trophy during a press conference in Montego Bay on Saturday.

Dav sees bright future

REUTERS, Bridgetown



An unbeaten run in the World Cup warm-ups could fulfil coach Dav Whatmore's prophecy that Bangladesh were not far off from shedding their tags as perennial underdogs.

While a victory over amateur outfit Scotland was always on the

cards, a spectacular two-wicket upset over New Zealand on their debut outing this week in the Caribbean came as a very timely major boost.

The victory took on even greater significance since the Kiwis stand third in the rankings after pulling off a 3-0 whitewash over world champions Australia just weeks ago.

"It's important for Bangladesh to win as many (matches) as we can. Against a good opposition like New Zealand, the win was terrific for us," Whatmore told reporters.

"We're ranked ninth... and most judges around the world would expect the opposition to beat Bangladesh every time there is fixture."

"(But) we're improving all the time and I just feel it's becoming more of a reality that Bangladesh might cause an upset or two."

It is a mantra that Whatmore hopes his men will carry forward over the next two weeks as the road ahead could turn out to be very bumpy.

Placed in one of the two groups featuring three Test nations, Bangladesh will have to steer past at least one of their more fancied sub-continent rivals India or Sri Lanka if they are to progress beyond the opening phase for the first time in three attempts.

If they needed any inspiration to knock one of the big two out in Group B, which also features debutants Bermuda, they need not look far.

Bangladesh were one of only four nations to finish with 2-0 records at the warm-ups this week, joining India, Australia and Pakistan.

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An Indian cricket fan flies a series of kites featuring pictures of the entire Indian cricket team in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Aftab's injury not serious

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed yesterday that national cricketer Aftab Ahmed's injury, which he suffered during the last official warm-up match against Scotland in Barbados, was not serious.

"What we knew that there is nothing wrong in his MRI report, which was done on Friday. The team management also informed the board that they are hopeful that the middle-order batsman would be able to play the first game against India," said Mahmudur Rahman, chief executive officer of BCB, yesterday.

The Chittagonian had sustained a muscle injury in his waist during the match, which forced him to leave the field on a stretcher.

NCL decisive round starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The title deciding tenth and final round of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League begins today at two different venues across the country.

Title aspirants Rajshahi and Dhaka, level on 36 points, face contrasting opponents in the four-dayers with the latter enjoying home advantage against bottom-side Khulna at the Fatullah Stadium.

On the other hand, Rajshahi will face a tough challenge to retain the title when they meet no hopes but inform Chittagong at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium. The port city team are in third position with 28 points.

The other last round match between Barisal and Sylhet will start on March 17 at the Fatullah Stadium.

Lalmatia Club edge CCS

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite brisk half-centuries by Jewel Hossain and Rakib, CCS remained winless in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League when they suffered a three-wicket defeat to Lalmatia Club yesterday.

Jewel made 60 and Rakib smashed a 41-ball 50 as CCS scored a fighting 234-7 in 50 overs at the Dhaka University ground.

Left-arm spinner Mohammad Islam was the peak of CCS attack with 2-43 but they failed to stop Lalmatia reaching 237-7 with 11 deliveries to spare. Adil topscored with 66 for the winners.

In other matches, Jatrabari KC (187-3) handed a seven-wicket defeat to Kathalbagan GCC (182) at BKSP. Gazi Tank defended a moderate 183 all out on way to a 21-run win against Young Pegasus B (162) at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium while Surjo Torun (238-6) recorded a four-wicket victory against Prantic KC (237) at the City Club ground.

BD A win at last

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

tions to make sure the lone victory against a strong England A, who also won the two-match Test (4-day) series) 1-0.

"We have at least got something from the series. Today everything went according to the plan. We wanted to do something different. That is why we started with the spinner and that worked," said Tushar.

"The two teams (England A and Sri Lanka A) are totally different.

That is also a completely different series and we will approach that differently," he added.

England A skipper Michael Yardy was slightly bitter for not finishing the tour unbeaten.

"It is really disappointing. We played poor cricket and paid the price for that. A score of 194 is by no means safe on this track," said Yardy adding that overall it has been a fairly satisfying trip.

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Bangladesh A batsman Manzarul Islam plays one over the top during their final one-day match against England A at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday.

PHOTO: STAR

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