

Golfers' training begins

SPORTS REPORTER

Twenty-seven promising golfers including national players are taking part in the Gemcon Young Tigers golfers' training programme which was inaugurated at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Distinguished Indian trainer Vikram Seth, who was among the speakers in the opening ceremony held at the same venue, is overseeing the training programme.

Major General Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, ndc, psc, officially opened the tournament where he spoke, along with vice-chairman of Gemcon Group Kazi Nabil Ahmed and the internationally renowned trainer Sethi.

Joint secretary of Bangladesh Golf Federation and CEO of Kurmitola Golf Club Col Syed Anwar Hussain also spoke during the press conference.

BFF's grounds committee secy Musa no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Moshir Rahman Musa, secretary of Bangladesh Football Federation's grounds committee, died of a cardiac arrest at a local hospital yesterday afternoon. He was 56.

Musa, who left behind his wife and two daughters, was the general secretary of Maghbazar Kira Chakra and served the Metropolis Football League Committee (MFLC) and the Pioneer Football League Committee for long time. His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today at 2.30pm.

Condoling the death of Musa, the BFF and MFLC expressed their heartfelt sympathy for the bereaved family.

A virtual

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TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Jacques Kallis, Loots Bosman, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Justin Kemp, Charl Langeveldt, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Pietersen, Shaun Pollock, Ashwell Prince, Roger Telemachus.

ENGLAND (from): Michael Vaughan (capt), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Ravi Bopara, Paul Collingwood, James Dalrymple, Andrew Flintoff, Ed Joyce, Stuart Broad, Sajid Mahmood, Paul Nixon, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Andrew Strauss.

Umpires: Billy Bowden and Steve Bucknor.

Windies do not

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be a part of history." The West Indies have lost all four of their Super Eights matches and they need a series of miracle results to squeeze into the last four.

If South Africa beat England on Tuesday, then all hope will be lost.

Attendances for most World Cup matches have been poor.

At Sunday's match between Bangladesh and Ireland in Barbados, free entry was reportedly being granted to spectators.

That match had been scheduled to feature India against Pakistan but both of the Asian giants were knocked out in the first round dealing a devastating blow to the tournament.

KP has all

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"I saw Smith in India and I saw him in the World Series and we said hello," said the 26-year-old.

An interesting tussle is on the cards when in-form Pietersen faces a quality South African pace attack, comprising Shaun Pollock and Makhaya Ntini, on a pitch having pace and bounce.

Pietersen has the technique and temperament to play a long innings on any surface, having the shots to demoralise any attack when in flow. He has already played a big role in England's Ashes series win over Australia at home in 2005.

South Africa will like to see the back of Pietersen as early as possible because they will be under pressure if he stays longer at the crease. They are aware he can alter the course of the match in a few overs with his big-hitting.

Pietersen is England's leading scorer in this tournament with 341 runs in seven matches. He has so far scored 1,923 runs in 49 one-day internationals with four centuries, including three against South Africa.



Did U Know?

Four different pitches were used in a Test between England and Australia at Sydney in 1883.



PHOTO: ISPR

Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Major General Md. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury inaugurates the Gemcon Young Tigers Golf Training Programme at Kurmitola Golf Club, Dhaka Cantonment on Monday.

Look beyond cricket: Blatter

Football

AFP, New Delhi

FIFA president Sepp Blatter on Monday urged cricket-mad India to embrace football, saying the sport had a great future in the land of one billion people.

"We are here not to fight against an established sport," Blatter told reporters on his first official visit to India, during which he will also meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"I admire the game called cricket and I don't want to change the most established sport in your country now," he said.

"But I always campaign for football because in this game there is no difference between caste, culture and creed or rich and poor. It is the fascination of this game that attracts people all over the world."

Blatter said FIFA had special plans to improve football in India,

who are currently ranked 165th in the world and 34th in Asia.

But he urged the country's football administrators to work harder to match world standards.

"The Indian dream of reaching top international levels can be realised through the work done by All India Football Federation (AIFF) with support from the government and corporate houses," he said.

"But it is only if you help yourself that heaven will help you. As Confucius said: 'If your brother asks for a fish, don't give him the same, instead teach him how to catch it.'"

Blatter said that football's future lay in Asia since Europe was "saturated for foreign players and coaches."

"Good coaches will come to India if a good technical and administrative infrastructure is in place."

Asian Football Confederation chief Mohammed bin Hammam of Qatar, who is accompanying Blatter on the three-day trip, was

critical of the AIFF headed by federal minister Priyaranjan Das Munshi.

"With the existing structure, don't think of progress even in the next 100 years," Hammam said.

India was the first Asian nation to make the Olympic semifinals at Melbourne in 1956 and won the Asian Games gold medal twice in 1951 and 1962.

It may have been just the tonic football needed to catch the imagination of the country's youth. Official apathy, however, denied the sport its due even as cricket made giant strides.

Baichung Bhutia, the only Indian to play professional football in England -- he spent three years with third-division Bury -- blamed lack of planning for the current mess.

"We have no infrastructures at all at the grassroots level," he said recently. "There is no system in this country to encourage young boys to play football. There is no professionalism."

Ricky bats for England!

AFP, St George's



Cup campaign, according to Ricky Ponting.

Michael Vaughan's side face South Africa in Barbados on Tuesday in a game they must win if they are to keep alive their hopes of a semifinal place.

Their form in the Caribbean has been mediocre at best. But it was a similar story in Australia when, after a 5-0 Ashes hammering by the hosts they endured a wretched start to the subsequent Commonwealth Bank one-day series.

However, they recovered to beat Australia 2-0 in the finals in February.

Australia captain Ponting, asked if England could enjoy a similar revival in the West Indies, replied: "I think there's a good chance that could happen."

"South Africa aren't playing their

best cricket at the moment.

"England probably haven't played their best cricket through this tournament yet either so I can see that being a bit closer game than what a lot of people might think."

Ponting, nicknamed "Punter" for his love of betting on greyhounds, added: "England, having been there and done it before in the Commonwealth Bank series, when everyone had written them off, know they have a chance of doing it again."

"It's a do or die game for them. If they win that, and the next one (against the West Indies on Saturday), they'll probably sneak through to the semifinals which would be a great result for them."

Although Australia beat England by seven wickets in Antigua on April 8, there was a moment at 64 for two, with Kevin Pietersen -- whose 104 was England's first individual hundred of the tournament -- and Ian Bell (77) going well in a stand of 140, when the champions were up against it.

"Our closest, hardest game so far has been the England game," said Ponting whose team were facing fellow semifinalists Sri Lanka here on Monday.

"But, saying that, we're ready for a good, hard, honest contest here and I think these conditions will probably suit Sri Lanka right down to the ground."

South Africa, who suffered a shock 67-run Super Eights defeat against Bangladesh in Guyana on April 7, lost to New Zealand by five wickets on Saturday after being sent in to bat on a seam-bowler friendly pitch under overcast skies.

But up until recently they were top of the one-day international rankings and in March last year they scored a world 438 for nine batting second to beat Australia by one wicket in Johannesburg.

"They probably didn't get the best of the conditions the other day but that can happen and they've probably lost a couple more games than I thought they would in this part of the tournament," said Ponting.

"But if they get everything right, I know how dangerous a side they can be."

A day to forget

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ankle, Ashrafat dislocated a finger...signs were not good from the onset. I think we lost the game in the batting. 243 is a good score but not one that can't be chased. We just lost too many wickets early on. We were also very ordinary in the field today and dropped vital catches and missed run outs," added Bashar.

Bangladesh were hit hard for their failure to dismiss opener William Porterfield who went on to make 85 precious runs after being dropped by Mohammed Rafique off his own bowling on 42. It was the easiest of caught and bowled chances but Rafique casually tried to pluck it with his left hand and missed.

"Consistency has been a problem. We are brilliant one day and ordinary the next. I guess overall Ireland have been more consistent but we have beaten two big sides in this tournament but today this was one game people expected us to win," said Bashar.

For the Bangladesh team it will be a day of reflection on Monday with no training scheduled. The problems that have come into fore so far in the tournament are more to do with the mindset than anything technical and the Tigers would try to regroup and come back strong against the West Indies on April 19 knowing that a win would ease if not erase the hurt felt on Sunday.

They would also hopefully receive the services of Rasel in the next match as the bowler has not complained of any more pain or discomfort. Ashrafat has seen a doctor straight after the match regarding the finger injury and should not have any problems for the final World Cup match.

Tourists

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Pakistan Academy first innings: 401-6 in 109 overs (Manzoor 64, Naeem 57, Latif 33, Yusuf 73, Alam 82, Raza 52 batting, Tanvir 5, Sarfraz 2 batting, extras 33, Mosharrar 3-101, Mehraab 1-74, Riyad 2-64).

Graveney backs

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over the last three or four weeks all over the Caribbean and practice-wise, they all look in good form."

There have been widespread calls for Andrew Flintoff to be moved to the top of the batting order in the key match with South Africa on Tuesday. Flintoff has made only 72 runs in five innings from the middle order but Graveney and Fletcher are seemingly reluctant to make changes with their talismanicall-rounder.

"We have to be flexible -- most sides are trying to be flexible but I don't see anything quite so dramatic," Graveney said.

Sheraton, BCB sign deal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) roped in Dhaka Sheraton Hotel as the official hospitality partner for the next two years.

The agreement for the official hospitality partner came into effect from February 1 this year through to January 31, 2008 for all the international matches, including Tests and one-day internationals, to be played in and around Dhaka.

As the hospitality partner, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel will provide 419 bedrooms free of cost to the players during the contractual period and will also host the BCB Awards Night.

Besides, they will also provide world-class catering during the international matches and host the board's press conferences.

In return, Sheraton Hotel has earned the right to use its logo at the air-conditioned hospitality box, president's box and on two perimeter boards at match venues for the international matches.

BCB vice president and marketing and commercial committee chairman Aziz Al Kaiser Tito disclosed the details at a press conference on Monday afternoon at Sheraton Hotel.

Razaq disgraces Woolmer

PTI, Dubai

Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razaq has criticised their late coach Bob Woolmer, saying he was only interested in keeping his job and his tenure made no difference to the team.

Razaq, who missed the World Cup due to an injury, said he knew that it was not right to pass adverse remarks on dead person but he had no regret to state the truth although it may sound unkind, according to a newspaper report.

"In my opinion Bob was a very shrewd operator. He was a coach just by nature of his job. Bob knew how to spend his time. For me, he must surely be one of the cleverest Britishers. On the surface he acted as an Asian but inside he was only interested in keeping his job irrespective of victory or defeat," Razaq was quoted as saying in Khaleej Times from Karachi.

Dare predict

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Ireland might have cashed in on the bite-less bowling and poor fielding but achieving a total of 244 never looked like an impossible task. Here lies the real problem of Bangladesh cricket because even in an otherwise impressive show in the Caribbean, the batting remained a real headache. It has been also proved that the team-management has agonisingly failed to find any answer about the opening pair.

Ace batsman Mohammad Ashrafat showed fire throughout the tournament including his epic match-winning 87 against South Africa but the way he threw out his wickets after a fantastic start in the last game simply raised the old debate of whether he has really understood his role in the team.

The most nagging question is whether the frequent changes in the batting line made by the team management make any sense. By doing this, they perhaps, shattered the confidence of the lot.

The other issue to provide food for thought is whether the selectors really have any faith in Javed Omar as an opener because it is hard to explain he was dropped after two crucial performances. Actually, the impression one gets from the selectors' acts that they simply picked him for the World Cup as a 'balancing act'.

The 'opening' crisis also reflects their wrong planning over the last couple of years.

The arrival of Shakib Al Hasan seemed to be a solution in the middle order but after few matches, the same old problem has surfaced and with Bashar at his lowest ebb, things turned from bad to worse.

It has time and again proved that the present think-tank's repeatedly practised 'cut and chop' policy could not be a solution for batsmen. So, saying 'all went wrong' after a defeat is not good enough. It needs to go to the root to find a solution to build a consistent team even if the Tigers pull off another stunning victory in their last game against the wounded hosts West Indies on April 19.

Irish belong

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They then bowled Bangladesh out for 169 in the 42nd over.

"We have a pretty big game against Sri Lanka on Wednesday. That will be the last game for (coach) Adrian Birrell, and it would be fitting way for us to send him off by putting on another display like this."

Birrell, who leaves the job after the World Cup, said he was proud of his team.

"We have got a great squad of players and there is a wonderful team spirit," said South Africa-born Birrell.

It was India-Pakistan!

AFP, Bridgetown



ICC Cricket World Cup

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