

BFF polls on June 9

SPORTS REPORTER

The election of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will be held on June 9, it was decided at an executive committee meeting of the football's governing body yesterday.

Although the tenure of the current committee expires this month, the BFF has reportedly got the green signal from FIFA and AFC to stay in power till the polls.

The meeting also formed two committees with BFF vice-president Monir Ahmed heading the Metropolis School Football League Committee and Azfaruzzaman Sohrab as chairman of the qualifying competition (under-10-12 years) for Danone Cup, which will be held in France.

Freddie the key player, says Jones

BBC ONLINE, undated

Fast bowler Simon Jones has defended Andrew Flintoff from the criticism the England squad is suffering following their World Cup exit on Tuesday.

Glamorgan's Jones, who says he is eager to reclaim his England place, says no one should question Flintoff's desire.

"He's looked a bit out of form but it happens, you can't be good all the time can you?" Jones told BBC Wales Sport.

"Fred (Flintoff) is such a key player that if he's not playing well then the whole team suffers."

England needed to beat South Africa in Tuesday's Super 8 match in Barbados to stay in the hunt for a semifinal place.

But instead Michael Vaughan's side slumped to a hurtful nine-wicket defeat as the Proteas easily swept past England's measly 154 all out.

"I don't know what to make of it because I wasn't there, but England do need Fred firing on all cylinders if they're going to succeed," added Jones.

"He had a super 2005 (Ashes) series, he was probably the world's best all-rounder then but you do get a dip in form sometimes.

"I'm sure he'll be working as hard as he can in the nets, working on his fitness and he'll be back, don't worry about it."

Jones has not played for England since the fourth Ashes Test in August 2005 because of injury.

The 28-year-old began his latest comeback last week in a friendly match against Sussex at Hove.

Glamorgan chose to rest Jones for Wednesday's first-class match against Oxford UCCE at The Parks, but he will return to competitive action on Sunday in the Friends Provident Trophy match at Somerset.

Jones is determined to force his way back into the England side, hopefully for the npower Test series against the West Indies which begins next month.

"We'll have to wait and see, and I'll have to take some wickets first," Jones said.

"I don't feel I have to prove my cricketing ability, I feel I just need to prove my fitness and if I can last the full five days.

"It's something I haven't done for a while, so it's going to take a little bit of time to get my rhythm.

"I'm looking forward to it, this is why I've worked so hard over the last 12 months just to get back playing and I can't wait now."

Hosts serious

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let them off the hook. They put up a good total and we were left to fight hard for a win and we failed in that," said Bashar.

Left-arm paceman Syed Rasel, who missed the Ireland match due to a sprained ankle suffered minutes before the toss, will return to face the West Indies, while batsman Mohammad Ashraful was also cleared to play after hurting his middle finger on the left hand.

"We must give it our best shot to end on a high note," said Bashar.

"We must realise that we deserve a better place than last."

TEAMS

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ramnareesh 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.

BANGLADESH (from): Habibul Bashar (captain), Shahriar Nafees, Tamim Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed, Shakib Al Hasan, Mohammad Ashraful, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Rafique, Abdur Razzak, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shahadat Hossain, Forhad Reza, Syed Rasel, Rajin Saleh, Javed Omar.

Umpires: Billy Bowden and Rudi Koerfzen.



Sheikh Russel fullback Aminul (R) challenges Khulna Abahani midfielder Tajul (C) during their B. League rematch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Styris wants Cup

AFF, St George's



Scott Styris believes the current New Zealand team can do something none of their predecessors managed and win the World Cup.

New Zealand, already through to their fifth semifinal in the tournament's nine-edition history, face fellow last four qualifiers and champions Australia in their final Super Eights match on Friday, at Grenada's National Stadium.

But whereas a semifinal spot might have been the summit of ambition for previous New Zealand teams, Styris reckons the side in the Caribbean can not only go one better and reach a final for the first time but take home the trophy as well.

"I am biased, but I think this is the first New Zealand side that is considered to have the first genuine opportunity to win it," said Styris

"If we play well, we know we are a good enough side to win it.

"In the past, a semifinal spot has been a fair result for some of those (New Zealand) teams. This team here, if we hadn't made the semis it would have been a failure.

"If we win it, then I think it's

deserved: if we don't, it's disappointing and that's probably not been the case for previous campaigns."

Arguably the closest New Zealand have come to winning the World Cup was in 1992, when they were joint hosts with Australia.

In front of a home crowd in Auckland, New Zealand were on top in their semifinal against Pakistan until the then unknown Inzamamul Haq scored 60 off 37 balls to turn the game the way of the eventual champions.

But by then New Zealand had already left a mark on the tournament, not least through the innovative tactics of captain Martin Crowe which included opening the bowling with off-spinner Deepak Patel.

"I was reasonably young," said the 31-year-old Styris, "but I do remember it gripping New Zealand."

He added: "New Zealand got in behind it big-time because they played well and out-thought a few opponents, which is where the history of New Zealand tactical smarts has come from, with Martin Crowe."

Styris has been in superb batting form in the Caribbean and is currently fourth in the tournament's list of leading run-scorers with 435 at a high average of 108.75, boosted by 111 not out in a six-wicket defeat by Sri Lanka here

Thursday -- New Zealand's only loss in the tournament to date.

"I'm happy with the way I'm going about my innings which is the thing that gets you good scores, particularly on these wickets," said Styris in a reference to the generally slow and low pitches in the West Indies.

"I was really happy with my first innings against England (where his composed, unbeaten 87 secured a six-wicket win in St Lucia last month).

"It set me up to get underway in this tournament right from the get-go," explained Styris, who at one stage feared he might miss this World Cup because of a back problem.

Hosts New Zealand thrashed Australia 3-0 in the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy in February and Styris said: "I'm sure they (Australia) are still smarting a bit and we need to fight fire with fire.

"Against England and the West Indies, we didn't let the foot off the throat which has always been a problem for New Zealand sides in the past."

Looking ahead to Friday's match Styris, born in Brisbane but brought up in New Zealand, said: "Any time you play Australia you want to beat them. It's a great feeling, I promise you, even in a so-called 'meaningless' game."

Imran bats for Shoaib

BBC ONLINE, undated

Pakistan great Imran Khan has backed Shoaib Malik as the best choice to take over as national team captain.

A new skipper is needed following Inzamamul Haq's decision to give up the job in the wake of the team's first round exit from the World Cup.

Batsman Mohammad Yousuf has declared an interest in the captaincy, but it is thought Malik may be the favourite.

"He appears to have a good cricket brain and could turn out to be a very good choice," said Imran.

"I hope he accepts the challenge. It could make him into a better player and bring out the best in him."

Malik is only 25, but has played 18 Tests and 137 limited overs internationals.

His career has not been without controversy -- two years ago he was given a one-Test ban for throwing a domestic Twenty20 game and his bowling action has twice been reported to the International Cricket Council.

He is, however, seen as a good choice for the future as Pakistan look to rebuild.

Asked about the captaincy, he replied: "I don't want to say anything about it because no-one has spoken to me about it yet. When it happens, fine."

Imran, meanwhile, has criticised Inzamam's former deputy, Younis Khan, who was offered the chance to take over as skipper but turned it down because he was angry at the reception the team received when they returned home from the World Cup.

"I don't understand it. If he didn't want to be captain, he should not have accepted the vice-captaincy for the last two years. His refusal has led to a crisis," said Imran, who led Pakistan to victory at the 1992 World Cup.

"It is useless trying to convince Younis to lead the team if he does not want to do it, but what he did was wrong."

LOCAL SNIPPETS

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203 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

North Bengal rode on Sarkar's 95 but also had to thank Anjum and Shakil who shared six wickets as they won comprehensively.

DIV 3 CRICKET

Dhanmondi Cricket Academy made a strong start to their Super League campaign in the Kai-Altech Third Division cricket league with a convincing seven-wicket triumph over Motijheel T&T Akota Club at the City Club ground.

All-rounder Shakhawat struck an unbeaten 76 as DCA reached their reduced target of 157 in 26 overs after rain stopped play for 30 minutes. Earlier, Motijheel were bowled out for 176 runs in 50 overs.

GAIBANDHA CRICKET

OUR CORRESPONDENT: Madhapara Krira Chakra beat Munshipara Krira Sangha by 69 runs in the First Division cricket league at the local stadium.

Opting to bat first, Madhapara reached 188 for 7 in 50 overs. In reply, Munshipara were bowled out for only 110 runs in 35.1 overs.

INTER-SERVICE HOCKEY

Army beat Navy 3-0 to clinch the Inter-Service Hockey Championship title at the BAF Base Maitir Rahman Hockey ground.

Sgt Sirajul Islam, who scored twice in the final, was adjudged the best player of the tournament.

Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman witnessed the final as chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners.

Russel win

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of Khulna's injured three-goal striker Prashanta.

Yellow card: Imrose (Khulna Abahani)

TEAMS

RUSSEL: Zia, Aminul, Bourdif, Hassan, Mishu, Saad, Ighir (Rikta), Khoubbache, Nayan (Kaiser), Tanvir and Bulbul.

KHULNA ABAHANI: Foyez, Moshui, Shahin, Hadiuzzaman, Awlad (Imrose), Moshui, Ashiqui, Tajul, Khalid, Pikul (Mamun) and Nazrul (Azmat).

Referee: Abdul Hannan.

Smith sheds

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five-wicket haul as South Africa dismissed England for a paltry 154 before surpassing their rivals' total with more than 30 overs to spare in a one-sided contest.

Smith himself led from the front, hammering a robust 58-ball 89 not out with 13 fours. He was involved in an 85-run stand for the opening wicket with AB de Villiers (42) to put his team on course for victory.

"I think in big games every captain and frontline player want to perform well. It was terrific to see the way the boys performed today," said Smith.

"Hopefully, we win that game (semifinal) and come back to Barbados for the final. The atmosphere today was terrific. The pitch has got good pace and bounce, which is always nice to see."

South Africa had lost to Bangladesh and New Zealand in their previous matches, but Smith said his side were motivated to do well in the crucial game.

"Our motivation was that we knew the sort of cricket that we can play and we just wanted to play it. We hadn't really achieved that so far in this tournament and I think we achieved it today," he said.

"We were superbly disciplined with the ball and to bowl them out for 154 was a great effort. We were led by Hall and then we just finished it off with the bat."

Vaughan not quitting

AFF, Bridgetown



Michael Vaughan insisted he will not quit after his team failed to qualify for the World Cup semifinals.

"I won't be retiring from one-day cricket. I am not stupid," said Vaughan after South Africa inflicted a nine-wicket defeat on England here on Tuesday to book the last place in the semifinals.

It is the fourth successive time that England have failed to qualify for the last four since finishing runners-up to Pakistan in the 1992 tournament in Australia.

England failed to fire in the highly-charged match at Kensington Oval which both teams needed to win to keep their World Cup dreams on track.

South Africa dismissed England for a paltry 154, with medium-pace Andrew Hall taking a career-best 5-18, and then cruised home with captain Graeme Smith smashing a 59-ball, 89 not out in a one-sided contest.

"I know it's an area (his position) of concern and it will be an area of talk over the next few days. The most important thing is getting

England back on track," said Vaughan.

"There needs to be a lot of honesty. We, as an England team, have had a very disappointing six months. We got hammered in the Champions Trophy, lost the Ashes 5-0, won the tri-series, smiled our way home on the flight, then turned up at the World Cup thinking we had a great chance of playing well.

"I firmly believed we would do a lot better than we have. To get knocked out of the World Cup in the circumstances that we have is not good enough for the talent in that dressing room."

Vaughan's dismal form with the bat continued as he fell for 17 and now has a miserable 130 in eight matches at the World Cup.

"My batting form has not been good at all in one-day cricket. I'm a very honest guy that says my position in the team is hugely in doubt because of my batting.

"But I still believe I am a very good captain, so people will have to sit down and discuss my position."

"We need to work out why it's gone wrong and work out who is the best person to lead us forward because the grass isn't always greener," said Vaughan whose injury allowed Andrew Flintoff to lead the team in Australia.

"It is not about Vaughan or (coach) Duncan Fletcher, it's about people coming up with a strategy, thinking about who is the best person to lead England forward, who is the best coach to lead England forward and if it's me and Fletch we will have to come forward and make a better strategy."

Besides Vaughan, Fletcher's position will also be under pressure after the World Cup exit but the England captain backed his coach.

"He is still an outstanding coach. I still think he has a tremendous amount to offer the English game. Only he knows how he is feeling at this moment in time. I know he will be very disappointed and hurt inside."

Vaughan said England's performance had led down the huge army of fans who had come to the Caribbean.

"It is a very sad day for English cricket, it's a horrible feeling to have walked off the park in Barbados and be booed by a lot of English supporters, rightfully so from the performance we put in."

"I fully understand why they have given us that kind of reception. It is a massive tournament. It is not a nice feeling but you have to accept it."

A wake-up call

CRICINFO, undated



A glance at the South African team-sheet first thing in the morning was enough to remove any lingering cobwebs of sleep.

Makhaya Ntini, with 83 wickets in his last 50 one-day games, wasn't in the 12, with Justin Kemp and Charl Langeveldt included after sitting out the defeat to New Zealand. Robin Peterson, who bowled a couple of overs of Chinaman in that game, was left to carry the drinks.

Given Ntini's poor run of form at this World Cup, it could hardly be called a shock exclusion, but after all the booze-and-late-nights stories that have swirled around the team over the past few days, it was no surprise that it gave life to plenty of speculation.

With a 48-hour 'calm-down' rule in place, had Ntini paid the price for one nocturnal jaunt too many?

Gordon Templeton, the media

manager, emphasised that it was certainly not the case. "It was a tactical decision," he said. "He hasn't performed as expected so far." The numbers certainly bear that out, with just six wickets at 48.83 from seven matches. He's also gone at 4.65 runs an over, with only one spell -- 2 for 26 against Sri Lanka in Guyana -- providing a glimpse of the damage that he can do when on top of his game.

Given the painful realities of the transformation process in South Africa, dropping Ntini would have been an incredibly tough decision. Apart from leading the line with the ball, he's South Africa's most popular cricketer by far, an icon to millions of young kids. He's also no binge-drinker, and had nothing to do with the alleged booze-up that caused such consternation amongst fans in Grenada.

At a cricketing level too, Ntini might have felt hard done by. After games on slow pitches in Guyana and Grenada, here was a surface perfect for his short-of-length bowling. On

pitches such as this, he can be almost unplayable. Australia (6 for 22 at Cape Town last March) and Pakistan (5 for 21 at Mohali in October's Champions Trophy) would certainly attest to that.

In the short-term though, dropping him might be the best way to bring the zest back. A fiercely proud man, he has usually responded to adversity with some of his finest performances. On his return after being falsely accused of rape in 2000, he wrecked New Zealand at Goodyear Park in Bloemfontein with 6 for 66. And famously, he responded to public criticism from Ray Jennings after the Guyana Test of 2005 to scalp 13 for 132 at the Queens Park Oval in Trinidad.

If form alone was the criteria though, Kemp's inclusion makes no sense whatsoever. A slow-medium liability with the ball, he has just 25 runs (58 balls) from his four innings in the competition. And with Andrew Hall in the side, South Africa bat all the way down to No.8.

'WI needs money'

AFF, Bridgetown



Former captain Clive Lloyd believes West Indies cricket needs money to move forward and that technology must be embraced to help the team who are "scraping the barrel" to remain competitive.

"What has happened in the World Cup has highlighted the need for more money and technology," said Lloyd, the manager of the West Indies team.

The West Indies, hosting the World Cup for the first time since it started in 1975, are virtually out of contention for a semifinal place after

picking up just two points from their five Super Eights matches.

They started off well by winning all three preliminary round matches but failed to keep up the momentum, losing to Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and South Africa in the second round.

Lloyd, who led the West Indies to their only World Cup triumphs in 1975 and 1979, said current players lack experience.

"Certainly there was a vast difference between this team and in the teams I led. We had some very good professionals, disciplined guys and they were aided by playing county cricket, and that gave them the professional edge," said Lloyd.

"These guys don't have the

experience but having said that I believe when you look at some other countries they are well ahead of us in every perspective and we are scraping the barrel here. Once we use technology and other facilities we can become a good side."

Lloyd blamed not sticking to disciplines in the Super Eights as the major reason for the poor showing.

"There was a combination of things why we lost our way. We didn't approach the second part as well as we should have, we didn't get all our disciplines right. Had we done that we could have been a match for anybody?"

AND V SOUTH AFRICA SCOREBO

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Panesar	2	0	24	0	-
Collingwood	2	0	12	0	-
Result: South Africa won by nine wickets.					
Man-of-the-match: Andrew Hall.					
Toss: England.					
Umpires: S Bucknor and S Taufel.					
Match referee: R Madugalle.					

Poland-Ukraine

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UEFA executive council members for their decision to accord us the right to host the European championship," Surkis told Ukrainian television.

"I promise that we will do our best to hold the championship at the highest possible level," he added.

In Warsaw, football fans and officials gathered in the city centre to watch the announcement on a giant television screen, burst into applause and chants.

"It will be our chance to show we are capable of organising large sports events like world championships or even the Olympics," Przemyslaw Gosiewski, an aide to Polish Prime Minister Jaroslav Kaczynski, said.

"This is our passport to enter the club of elite countries," he added.

In Rome, the reaction was much more muted with Italian sports minister Giovanna Melandri saying the decision had been mainly a political one.

"They wanted to open up the finals to former eastern bloc countries who are striving to fully join the European scene," she told Italian television.

"We just have to accept it in the

name of sports and now try to win on the field."

The announcement follows hard on the heels of the recent election of Platini, the French midfield legend who captained his country to the European title on home turf in 1984.

In so doing he defeated longtime incumbent Lennart Johansson of Sweden promising to champion the smaller and less affluent countries that are members of the UEFA.

"Today, Poland/Ukraine has been chosen by the UEFA executive committee to host Euro 2012 and they are surely a worthy winner," he said.

"However, there are no losers today, rather only bids that have not won this time round."

The 2012 finals will once again feature 16 teams despite UEFA examining a proposal to extend it to 24 countries.

Greece are the current European champions having won the title in Lisbon in 2004. Neither Poland nor Ukraine have won the European title.

Lanka kept

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Australia claimed their full strength team for the clash, but de Mel said the Sri Lankans were in no hurry to show off their armoury.

"We did not want to give the Australians a free dress rehearsal. We are saving our armoury for the finals," de Mel said, adding the selectors were keen to field Vaas and Muralidaran in Wednesday's clash with Ireland.

Prats

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"The coach ... must be replaced as quickly as is feasible to interview his potential replacements, while (captain) Michael Vaughan should concentrate on Test cricket."

"As it has been all tournament, the overriding problem was England's lame batting."

South Africa made a mockery of the England total, with skipper Graeme Smith (89 not out) and AB de Villiers (42) putting on 85 for the opening wicket off just 59 balls in a one-sided contest.

England, who have beaten only debutants Ireland and Bangladesh in the second round, remained on four points with just one game to go against the hosts, who have two points from five matches.

The general theme of the British press was summed up by the Daily Mail, which said in its match report that when "the end of England's World Cup campaign finally came last night, it was not so much an elimination as a mercy killing."

"Such a performance surely leaves coach Duncan Fletcher to walk the plank in the time-honoured fashion associated with pirates of these parts."